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## THE PHILOSOPHY OF OUR PEOPLE

[*Presidential Address at the Indian Philosophical Congress.*]

*By* RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

My timidity makes it difficult for me properly to enjoy the honour you have done me to-day by offering a chair which I cannot legitimately claim as my own. It has often made me wonder, since I had my invitation, whether it would suit my dignity to occupy such a precarious position on an ephemeral eminence, deservedly incurring anger from some and ridicule from others. While debating in my mind as to whether I should avoid this risk with the help of the doctor's certificate, it occurred to me that possibly my ignorance of philosophy was the best recommendation for this place in a philosophers' meeting,—that you wanted for your president a man who was blankly neutral and who consciously owed no allegiance to any particular system of metaphysics, being impartially innocent of them all. The most convenient thing about me is that the degree of my qualification is beyond the range of a comparative discussion,—it is so utterly negative. In my present situation, I may be compared to a candlestick that has none of the luminous qualities of a candle and, therefore, suitable for its allotted function, which is to remain darkly inactive.

But, unfortunately, you do not allow me to remain silent even in the circumstance when silence was declared to be prudent by one of our ancient sages. The only thing which encourages me to overcome my diffidence, and give expression in a speech to my unsophisticated mind, is the fact that in India all the *vidyás*,—poesy as well as philosophy,—live in a joint family. They never have the jealous sense of individualism maintain-

ing the punitive regulations against trespass that seem to be so rife in the West.

Plato as a philosopher decreed the banishment of poets from his ideal Republic. But, in India, philosophy ever sought alliance with poetry, because its mission was to occupy the people's life and not merely the learned seclusion of scholarship. Therefore, our tradition, though unsupported by historical evidence, has no hesitation in ascribing numerous verses to the great Sankarácharya, a metaphysician whom Plato would find it extremely difficult to exclude from his Utopia with the help of any inhospitable Immigration Law. Many of these poems may not have high poetical value, but no lover of literature ever blames the sage for infringement of propriety in condescending to manufacture verse.

According to our people, poetry naturally falls within the scope of a philosopher, when his reason is illumined into a vision. We have our great epic Mahábhárata, which is unique in world literature, not only because of the marvellous variety of human characters, great and small, discussed in its pages in all variety of psychological circumstances, but because of the ease with which it carries in its comprehensive capaciousness all kinds of speculation about ethics, politics and philosophy of life. Such an improvident generosity on the part of poesy, at the risk of exceeding its own proper limits of accomodation, has only been possible in India where a spirit of communism prevails the different individual groups of literature. In fact, the Mahabharata is a universe in itself in which various spheres of mind's creation find ample space for their complex dance rhythm. It does not represent the idiosyncracy of a particular poet but the normal mentality of the people who are willing to be led along the many branched path of a whole world of thoughts, held together in a gigantic orb of narrative surrounded by innumerable satellites of episodes.

The numerous saints that India successively produced during the Mahomedan rule have all been singers whose verses are aflame with the fire of imagination. Their religious emotion had its spring in the depth of a philosophy that deals with

fundamental questions,—with the ultimate meaning of existence. That may not be remarkable in itself; but when we find that these songs are not specially meant for some exclusive pundits' gathering, but that they are sung in villages and listened to by men and women who are illiterate, we realise how philosophy has permeated the life of the people in India, how it has sunk deep into the sub-conscious mind of the country.

In my childhood I once heard from a singer, who was a devout Hindu, the following song of Kabir:

*When I hear of a fish in the water dying of thirst, it makes me laugh.*
*If it be true that the infinite Brahma pervades all space,*
*What is the meaning of the places of pilgrimage like Mathura or Kashi?*

This laughter of Kabir did not hurt in the least the pious susceptibilities of the Hindu singer; on the contrary, he was ready to join the poet with his own. For he, by the philosophical freedom of his mind, was fully aware that Mathura or Kashi, as sites of God, did not have an absolute value of truth, though they had their symbolical importance. Therefore, while he himself was eager to make a pilgrimage to those places, he had no doubt in his mind that, if it were in his power directly to realise Brahma as an all-pervading reality, there would have been no necessity for him to visit any particular place for the quickening of his spiritual consciousness. He acknowledged the psychological necessity for such shrines, where generations of devotees have chosen to gather for the purpose of worship, in the same way as he felt the special efficacy for our mind of the time-honoured sacred texts made living by the voice of ages.

It is a village poet of East Bengal who in his songs preaches the philosophical doctrine that the universe has its reality in its relation to the Person. He sings:

*The sky and the earth are born of mine own eyes.*
*The hardness and softness, the cold and the heat*
*are the products of my own body;*
*The sweet smell and the bad are of my own nose.*

This poet sings of the Eternal Person within him, coming out and appearing before his eyes just as the Vedic Rishi speaks of the Person, who is in him, dwelling also in the heart of the Sun.

*I have seen the vision,*
*The vision of mine own revealing itself,*
*Coming out from within me.*

The significant fact about these philosophical poems is that they are of rude construction, written in a popular dialect and disclaimed by the academic literature; they are sung to the people, as composed by one of them who is dead, but whose songs have not followed him. Yet these singers almost arrogantly disown their direct obligation to philosophy, and there is a story of one of our rural poets who, after some learned text of the Vaishnava philosophy of emotion was explained to him, composed a song containing the following lines:

*Alas, a jeweller has come into the flower garden!—*
*He wants to appraise the truth of a lotus by rubbing it*
*against his touchstone.*

The members of the *Baül* sect belong to that mass of the people in Bengal who are not educated in the prevalent sense of the word. I remember how troubled they were, when I asked some of them to write down for me a collection of their songs. When they *did* venture to attempt it, I found it almost impossible to decipher their writing—the spelling and lettering were so outrageously unconventional. Yet their spiritual practices are founded upon a mystic philosophy of the human body, abstrusely technical. These people roam about singing their songs, one of which I heard years ago from my roadside window, the first two lines remaining inscribed in my memory:

*Nobody can tell whence the bird unknown*
*Comes into the cage and goes out.*
*I would feign put round its feet the fetter of my mind,*
*Could I but capture it.*

This village poet evidently agrees with our sage of the Upanishad who says that our mind comes back baffled in its attempt to reach the Unknown Being; and yet this poet like the ancient sage does not give up his adventure of the infinite, thus implying that there is a way to its realisation. It reminds me of Shelley's poem in which he sings of the mystical spirit of Beauty:

> The awful shadow of some unseen Power
> Floats, though unseen, among us ; visiting
> This various world with as inconstant wing
> As summer winds that creep from flower to flower.
> Like moonbeams that behind some piny mountain shower,
> It visits with inconstant glance
> Each human heart and countenance.

That this Unknown is the profoundest reality, though difficult of comprehension, is equally admitted by the English poet as by the nameless village singer of Bengal in whose music vibrate the wing beats of the unknown bird,— only Shelley's utterance is for the cultured few while the *Baül* song is for the tillers of the soil, for the simple folk of our village households, who are never bored by its mystic transcendentalism.

All this is owing to the wonderful system of mass education which has prevailed for ages in India, and which to-day is in danger of becoming extinct. We have our academic seats of learning where students flock round their famous teachers from distant parts of the country. These places are like lakes, full of deep but still water, which have to be approached through difficult paths. But the constant evaporation from them, forming clouds, is carried by the wind from field to field, across hills and dales and through all the different divisions of the land. Operas based upon legendary poems, recitations and story-telling by trained men, the lyrical wealth of the popular literature distributed far and wide by the agency of mendicant singers,—these are the clouds that help to irrigate the minds of the people with the ideas which in their original form belonged to difficult doctrines of metaphysics. Profound speculations contained in the systems of Sánkhya, Vedánta and Yôga are

transformed into the living harvest of the people's literature, brought to the door of those who can never have the leisure and training to pursue these thoughts to their fountain-head.

In order to enable a civilised community to carry on its complex functions, there must be a large number of men who have to take charge of its material needs, however onerous such task may be. Their vocation gives them no opportunity to cultivate their mind. Yet they form the vast multitude, compelled to turn themselves into unthinking machines of production, so that a few may have the time to think great thoughts, create immortal forms of art and to lead humanity to spiritual altitudes.

India has never neglected these social martyrs, but has tried to bring light into the grimy obscurity of their life-long toil, and has always acknowledged its duty to supply them with mental and spiritual food in assimilable form through the medium of a variety of ceremonies. This process is not carried on by any specially organised association of public service, but by a spontaneous social adjustment which acts like circulation of blood in our bodily system. Because of this, the work continues even when the original purpose ceases to exist.

Once when I was on a visit to a small Bengal village, mostly inhabited by Mahomedan cultivators, the villagers entertained me with an opera performance the literature of which belonged to an obsolete religious sect that had wide influence centuries ago. Though the religion itself is dead, its voice still continues preaching its philosophy to a people who in spite of their different culture are not tired of listening. It discussed according to its own doctrine the different elements, material and transcendental, that constitute human personality, comprehending the body, the self and the soul. Then came a dialogue during the course of which was related the incident of a person who wanted to make a journey to *Brindában,* the Garden of Bliss, but was prevented by a watchman who startled him with an accusation of theft. The thieving was proved when it was shown that inside his clothes he was secretly trying to smuggle into the garden the *self,* passing it on as his own and not admitting that it is for his master. The culprit was caught

with the incriminating bundle in his possession which barred for him his passage to the supreme goal. Under a tattered canopy held on bamboo poles and lighted by a few smoking kerosine lamps, the village crowd, occasionally interrupted by howls of jackals in the neighbouring paddy fields, attended with untired interest, till the small hours of the morning, the performance of a drama, that discussed the ultimate meaning of all things in a seemingly incongruous setting of dance, music and humorous dialogue.

These illustrations will show how naturally, in India, poetry and philosophy have walked hand in hand, only because the latter has claimed its right to guide men to the practical path of their life's fulfilment. What is that fulfilment? It is our freedom in truth, which has for its prayer :

*Lead us from the unreal to Reality.*

For *satyam is ánandam,* the real is joy.

From my vocation as an artist in verse, I have come to my own idea about the joy of the real. For to give us the taste of reality through freedom of mind is the nature of all arts. When in relation to them we talk of æsthetics we must know that it is not about beauty in its ordinary meaning, but in that deeper meaning which a poet has expressed in his utterance : "Truth is beauty, beauty truth." An artist may paint a picture of a decrepit person not pleasant to look at, and yet we call it perfect when we become intensely conscious of its reality. The mind of the jealous woman in Browning's poem, watching the preparation of poison and in imagination gloating over its possible effect upon her rival, is not beautiful; but when it stands vividly real before our consciousness, through the unity of consistency in its idea and form, we have our enjoyment. The character of Karna, the great warrior of the Mahabharata, gives us a deeper delight through its occasional outbursts of meanness, than it would if it were a model picture of unadulterated magnanimity. The very contradictions which hurt the completeness of a moral ideal have helped us to feel the reality of the character, and this gives us joy, not because it is pleasant in itself, but because it is definite in its creation.

It is not wholly true that art has its value for us because in it we realise all that we fail to attain in our life; but the fact is that the function of art is to bring us, with its creations, into immediate touch with reality. These need not resemble actual facts of our experience, and yet they do delight our heart because they are made true to us. In the world of art, our consciousness being freed from the tangle of self-interest, we gain an unobstructed vision of unity, the incarnation of the real, which is a joy for ever.

As in the world of art, so in God's world, our soul waits for its freedom from the ego to reach that disinterested joy which is the source and goal of creation. It cries for its *mukti* into the unity of truth from the mirage of appearances endlessly pursued by the thirsty self. This idea of *mukti,* based upon metaphysics, has affected our life in India, touched the springs of our emotions, and supplications for it soar heavenward on the wings of poesy. We constantly hear men of scanty learning and simple faith singing in their prayer to *Tara,* the Goddess Redeemer:

*For what sin should I be compelled to remain in this dungeon of the world of appearance?*

They are afraid of being alienated from the world of truth, afraid of their perpetual drifting amidst the froth and foam of things, of being tossed about by the tidal waves of pleasure and pain and never reaching the ultimate meaning of life. Of these men, one may be a carter driving his cart to market, another a fisherman plying his net. Thay may not be prompt with an intelligent answer, if questioned about the deeper import of the song they sing, but they have no doubt in their mind, that the abiding cause of all misery is not so much in the lack of life's furniture as in the obscurity of life's significance. It is a common topic with such to decry an undue emphasis upon *me* and *mine,* which falsifies the perspective of truth. For, have they not often seen men, who are not above their own level in social position or intellectual acquirement, going out to seek Truth, leaving everything that they have behind them?

They know that the object of these adventurers is not better-

ment in worldly wealth and power,—it is *mukti*, freedom. They possibly know some poor fellow villager of their own craft, who remains in the world carrying on his daily vocation, and yet has the reputation of being emancipated in the heart of the Eternal. I myself have come across a fisherman singing with an inward absorption of mind, while fishing all day in the Ganges, who was pointed out to me by my boatmen, with awe, as a man of liberated spirit. He is out of reach of the conventional prices which are set upon men by society, and which classify them like toys arranged in the shop-windows according to the market standard of value.

When the figure of this fisherman comes to my mind, I cannot but think that their number is not small who with their lives sing the epic of the unfettered soul, but will never be known in history. These unsophisticated Indian peasants know that an Emperor is a decorated slave remaining chained to his Empire, that a millionaire is kept pilloried by his fate in the golden cage of his wealth, while this fisherman is free in the realm of light. When, groping in the dark, we stumble against objects, we cling to them believing them to be our only hope. When light comes we slacken our hold, finding them to be mere parts of the all to which we are related. The simple man of the village knows what freedom is—freedom from the isolation of self, from the isolation of things which imparts a fierce intensity to our sense of possession. He knows that this freedom is not in the mere negation of bondage, in the bareness of belongings, but in some positive realisation which gives pure joy to our being, and he sings :

*To him who sinks into the deep, nothing remains unattained.*

*

*Let my two minds meet and combine*
*And lead me to the City Wonderful.*

When the one mind of ours which wanders in search of things in the outer region of the varied, and the other which seeks the inward vision of unity, are no longer in conflict, they

help us to realise the *ajab,* the *anirvachanîya,* the ineffable. The poet saint Kabir has also the same message when he sings :

*By saying that Supreme Reality only dwells in the inner realm of spirit we shame the outer world of matter, and also when we say that he is only in the outside we do not speak the truth.*

According to these singers, truth is in unity and therefore freedom is in its realisation. The texts of our daily worship and meditation are for training our mind to overcome the barrier of separateness from the rest of existence and to realise *advaitam,* the Supreme Unity which is *anantam,* infinitude. It is philosophical wisdom having its universal radiation in the popular mind in India that inspires our prayer, our daily spiritual practices. It has its constant urging for us to go beyond the world of appearances in which facts as facts are alien to us, like the mere sounds of a foreign music; it speaks to us of an emancipation in the inner truth of all things in which the endless *many* reveals the *One,* as the multitude of notes, when we understand them, reveal to us the inner unity which is music.

But because this freedom is in truth itself and not in an appearance of it, no hurried path of success, forcibly cut out by the greed of result, can be a true path. And an obscure village poet, unknown to the world of recognised respectability, untramelled by the standardised learning of the Education Department, sings :

*O cruel man of urgent need, must you scorch with fire the mind which still is a bud? You will burst it into bits, destroy its perfume in your impatience. Do you not see that my lord, the Supreme Teacher, takes ages to perfect the flower and never is in a fury of haste? But because of your terrible greed you only rely on force, and what hope is there for you, O man of urgent need? "Prithee!" says Madan the poet. "Hurt not the mind of my Teacher. Know that only he who follows the simple current and loses himself, can hear the voice, O man of urgent need."*

This poet knows that there is no external means of taking freedom by the throat. It is the inward process of losing ourselves that leads us to it. Bondage in all its forms

has its stronghold in the inner self and not in the outside world; it is in the dimming of our consciousness, in the narrowing of our perspective, in the wrong valuation of things.

The proof of this we find in the modern civilization whose motive force has become a ceaseless urgency of need. Its freedom is only the apparent freedom of inertia which does not know how and where to stop. There are some primitive people who have put an artificial value on human scalps and they develop an arithmetical fury which does not allow them to stop in the gathering of their trophies. They are driven by some cruel fate into an endless exaggeration which makes them ceaselessly run on an interminable path of addition. Such a freedom in their wild course of collection is the worst form of bondage. The cruel urgency of need is all the more aggravated in their case because of the lack of truth in its object. Similarly it should be realised that a mere addition to the rate of speed, to the paraphernalia of fat living and display of furniture, to the frightfulness of destructive armaments, only leads to an insensate orgy of a caricature of bigness. The links of bondage go on multiplying themselves, threatening to shackle the whole world with the chain forged by such unmeaning and unending urgency of need.

The idea of *mukti* in Christian theology is liberation from a punishment which we carry with our birth. In India it is from the dark enclosure of ignorance which causes the illusion of a self that seems final. But the enlightenment which frees us from this ignorance must not merely be negative. Freedom is not in an emptiness of its contents, it is in the harmony of communication through which we find no obstruction in realising our own being in the surrounding world. It is of this harmony, and not of a bare and barren isolation, that the Upanishad speaks, when it says that the truth no longer remains hidden in him who finds himself in the All.

Freedom in the material world has also the same meaning expressed in its own language. When nature's phenomena appeared to us as manifestations of an obscure and irrational caprice, we lived in an alien world never dreaming of our *swaraj* within its territory. With the discovery of the harmony of its

working with that of our reason, we realise our unity with it and, therefore, freedom. It is *avidyá*, ignorance, which causes our disunion with our surroundings. It is *vidyá*, the knowledge of the Brahma manifested in the material universe that makes us realise *advaitam*, the spirit of unity in the world of matter.

Those who have been brought up in a misunderstanding of this world's process, not knowing that it is his by his right of intelligence, are trained as cowards by a hopeless faith in the ordinance of a destiny darkly dealing its blows, offering no room for appeal. They submit without struggle when human rights are denied them, being accustomed to imagine themselves born as outlaws in a world constantly thrusting upon them incomprehensible surprises of accidents.

Also in the social or political field, the lack of freedom is based upon the spirit of alienation, on the imperfect realisation of *advaitam*. There our bondage is in the tortured link of union. One may imagine that an individual who succeeds in dissociating himself from his fellows attains real freedom, inasmuch as all ties of relationship imply obligation to others. But we know that, though it may sound paradoxical, it is true that in the human world only a perfect arrangement of interdependence gives rise to freedom. The most individualistic of human beings, who own no responsibility, are the savages who fail to attain their fulness of manifestation. They live immersed in obscurity, like an ill-lighted fire that cannot liberate itself from its envelope of smoke. Only those may attain their freedom from the segregation of an eclipsed life, who have the power to cultivate mutual understanding and co-operation. The history of the growth of freedom is the history of the perfection of human relationship.

The strongest barrier against freedom in all departments of life is the selfishness of individuals or groups. Civilisation, whose object is to afford humanity its greatest possible opportunity of complete manifestation, perishes when some selfish passion, in place of a moral ideal, is allowed to exploit its resources unopposed, for its own purposes. For the greed of acquisition and the living principle of creation are antagonistic to each other. Life has brought with it the first triumph of

freedom in the world of the inert, because it is an inner expression and not merely an external fact, because it must always exceed the limits of its substance, never allowing its materials to clog its spirit, and yet ever keeping to the limits of its truth. Its accumulation must not suppress its harmony of growth, the harmony that unites the *in* and the *out,* the end and the means, the *what is* and the *what is to come.*

Life does not store up but assimilates; its spirit and its substance, its work and itself, are intimately united. When the non-living elements of our surroundings are stupendously disproportionate, when they are mechanical systems and hoarded possessions, then the mutual discord between our life and our world ends in the defeat of the former. The gulf thus created by the receding stream of soul we try to replenish with a continuous shower of wealth which may have the power to fill but not the power to unite. Therefore the gap is dangerously concealed under the glittering quick-sands of things which by their own accumulating weight cause a sudden subsidence, while we are in the depth of our sleep.

But the real tragedy does not lie in the destruction of our material security, it is in the obscuration of man himself in the human world. In his creative activities man makes his surroundings instinct with his own life and love. But in his utilitarian ambition he deforms and defiles it with the callous handling of his voracity. This world of man's manufacture with its discordant shrieks and mechanical movements, reacts upon his own nature, incessantly suggesting to him a scheme of universe which is an abstract system. In such a world there can be no question of *mukti,* because it is a solidly solitary fact, because the cage is all that we have, and no sky beyond it. In all appearance the world to us *is* a closed world, like a seed within its hard cover. But in the core of the seed there is the cry of Life for *mukti* even when the proof of its possibility is darkly silent. When some huge temptation tramples into stillness this living aspiration after *mukti,* then does civilisation die like a seed that has lost its urging for germination.

It is not altogether true that the ideal of *mukti* in India is based upon a philosophy of passivity. The Ishopanishad has

strongly asserted that man must wish to live a hundred years and go on doing his work; for, according to it, the complete truth is in the harmony of the infinite and the finite, the passive ideal of perfection and the active process of its revealment; according to it, he who pursues the knowledge of the infinite as an absolute truth sinks even into a deeper darkness than he who pursues the cult of the finite as complete in itself. He who thinks that a mere aggregation of changing notes has the ultimate value of unchanging music, is no doubt foolish; but his foolishness is exceeded by that of one who thinks that true music is devoid of all notes. But where is the reconciliation? Through what means does the music which is transcendental turn the facts of the detached notes into a vehicle of its expression? It is through the rhythm, the very limit of its composition. We reach the infinite through crossing the path that is definite. It is this that is meant in the following verse of the Isha:

*He who knows the truth of the infinite and that of the finite both united together, crosses death by the help of* avidyá, *and by the help of* vidyá *reaches immortality.*

The regulated life is the rhythm of the finite through whose very restrictions we pass to the immortal life. This *amritam*, the immortal life, is not a mere prolongation of physical existence, it is in the realisation of the perfect, it is in the well-proportioned beautiful definition of life which every moment surpasses its own limits and expresses the Eternal. In the very first verse of the Isha, the injunction is given to us **má gridhah**, *Thou shalt not covet.* But why should we not? Because greed, having no limit, smothers the rhythm of life—the rhythm which is expressive of the limitless.

The modern civilisation is largely composed of *atmahanô-janáh* who are spiritual suicides. It has lost its will for limiting its desires, for restraining its perpetual self-exaggeration. Because it has lost its philosophy of life, it loses its art of living. Like poetasters it mistakes skill for power and realism for reality. In the Middle Ages when Europe believed in the kingdom of heaven, she struggled to modulate her life's forces to effect their harmonious relation to this ideal, which always sent its call

to her activities in the midst of the boisterous conflict of her passions. There was in this endeavour an ever present scheme of creation, something which was positive, which had the authority to say : *Thou shalt not covet, thou must find thy true limits.* To-day there is only a furious rage for raising numberless brick-kilns in place of buildings. The great scheme of the master-builder has been smothered under the heaps of brick-dust. It proves the severance of *avidyá* from her union with *vidyá* giving rise to an unrhythmic power, ignoring all creative plan, igniting a flame that has heat but no light.

Creation is in rhythm,—the rhythm which is the border on which *vidyáncha avidyáncha,* the infinite and the finite, meet. We do not know how, from the indeterminate, the lotus flower finds its being. So long as it is merged in the vague it is nothing to us, and yet it must have been everywhere. Somehow from the vast it has been captured in a perfect rhythmical limit, forming an eddy in our consciousness, arousing within us a recognition of delight at the touch of the infinite which finitude gives It is the limiting process which is the work of a creator, who finds his freedom through his restraints, the truth of the boundless through the reality of the bounds. The insatiable idolatory of material, that runs along an ever-lengthening line of extravagance, is inexpressive; it belongs to those regions which are *andhênatamasávritah,* enveloped in darkness, which ever carry the load of their inarticulate bulk. The true prayer of man is for the Real not for the big, for the Light which is not in incendiarism but in illumination, for Immortality which is not in duration of time, but in the eternity of the perfect.

Only because we have closed our path to the inner world of *mukti,* has the outer world become terrible in its exactions. It is a slavery to continue to live in a sphere where things are, yet where their meaning is obstructed. It has become possible for men to say that existence is evil, only because in our blindness we have missed something in which our existence has its truth. If a bird tries to soar in the sky with only one of its wings, it is offended with the wind for buffeting it down to the dust. All broken truths are evil. They hurt because they suggest something which they do not offer. Death does not hurt us, but

disease does, because disease constantly reminds us of health and yet withholds it from us. And life in a half world is evil, because it feigns finality when it is obviously incomplete, giving us the cup, but not the draught of life. All tragedies consist in truth remaining fragmentary, its cycle not being completed.

Let me close with a *Baül* song, over a century old, in which the poet sings of the eternal bond of union between the infinite and the finite soul, from which there can be no *mukti,* because it is an interrelation which makes truth complete, because love is ultimate, because absolute independence is the blankness of utter sterility. The idea in it is the same as we have in the Upanishad, that truth is neither in pure *vidyá* nor in *avidyá,* but in their union :

*It goes on blossoming for ages, the soul-lotus in which I am bound, as well as thou, without escape. There is no end to the opening of its petals, and the honey in its has such sweetness that thou like an enchanted bee canst never desert it, and therefore thou art bound, and I am, and* mukti *is nowhere.*

# INDIAN RELIGION TO-DAY

*By* Dr. Sten Konow.

In my series of lectures in the Visva-bharati I have tried to follow the development of religious thought in Aryan India during the ages. The development has, up to quite recent times been, to all practical purposes, entirely Indian. From time to time, impulses and ideas may have been brought into India from abroad, but they have, in course of time, become so thoroughly Indianised that we cannot any more distinguish them.

Such a state of things must obviously be the result of a comparative isolation, which placed certain obstacles in the way of the free intercourse between the different parts of the world. And so the home-grown civilisation, crystallised into religious ideals, could acquire sufficient strength to be able to hold its own, whenever India came into closer contact with the outer world, for a shorter or longer period.

One would expect to find that matters became different as soon as such intercourse became livelier and more intimate, specially in the 19th Century, when the ancient civilisations of the East and the West met in full earnest, and when the whole world became one single field of activity; when politics and history became more and more cosmopolitan, and the isolation and seclusion of the different countries and continents gradually became a thing of the past.

The contact between the East and the West was nowhere closer than in India, and here, if anywhere, we might reasonably expect to be able to see the results of the contact. It is easy to discover them in the material changes during the past century. We can also see how European ideas were largely adopted and assimilated by educated Indians. And I think that we can also trace them in some features which are characteristic of the religious development in the 19th Century. It is about this aspect of the phenomenon that I should like to offer some remarks.

During its history, India has more than once been partially subjected by foreign conquerors, even if we do not take into account the first Aryan invasion which was of such fundamental importance for Indian civilisation. But, down to about 1000 years ago, such conquests have scarcely left visible marks behind. The Indian people were in possession of a spiritual culture which proved stronger than that of the various invaders, who gradually became quite Indianised.

Then came the Muhammadans, who entered India both as conquerors and as propagandists of their own faith. They brought about a cleavage in the population, which is still apparent at the present day, and though these foreigners also became Indians, and though Muhammadan conceptions have perhaps played a certain rôle in the religious notions of men like Kabir and Nanak, it is at present difficult to trace a really new colouring in the mentality of the Aryan Indian as a result of his contact with Islam. There was more of conflict than co-operation and interpenetration.

A similar result is to be noticed in regard to the first European attempts at exploiting India. The Portuguese came with the double aim of winning riches and of preaching the gospel of Christ. The result was some Indian converts and a small ethnic element of mixed descent. But it is hardly possible to point to any interchange of religious ideas, or indeed of any perceptible result of this Christian propaganda. It is easy to understand why such was the case. In Indian civilisation religion has always played a prominent part, and the leaders of Indian thought have not been inclined to allow themselves to be influenced by ideas and conceptions which were avowedly in conflict with their own, especially when they were backed by physical power. The Indian thinker is open to conviction, but not to force.

Then came the English, who did not try to interfere with the people's beliefs or customs but were content to trade and to conquer. They stuck to their own faith and left the Indians to do the same. Therefore, to begin with, the two currents did not show any tendency to mix. There was aloofness, but not conflict. And in this aloofness the germs of mutual respect

found their soil. It was not long before the leading Englishmen felt the necessity of seeking contact with the Indians at many points. It was, for instance, necessary to study Indian law and Indian customs for the purposes of administration. And this soon led to a closer personal intercourse between leading Englishmen and Indians. English scholars, moreover, showed a keen interest in the ancient Indian civilisation, and they tried their best to learn from the Indian pandits. Mutual respect has always proved to be the surest way to understanding and sympathy, and there soon came about a collaboration between educated Indians and Europeans, which was destined to lead to important results.

Just as the English had gone to school with the Indian scholars, so also did the latter begin to think that they could learn something from the Englishmen, even about things dearest to their heart, for was it not possible that the attitude of the English towards Indian religions might be dictated by the same feeling as was all along found in the Bhagavadgita, and even in the Rigveda, that God is the same behind all the different names. There were perhaps not many Indians who actually reasoned in this way. But ideas and conceptions are often present as vague impressions before they are clearly formulated. And early in the 19th Century there did appear an Indian who soon gave adequate expression to the thought.

There are not many names in modern Indian History which more deserve to be remembered with gratitude than that of Rámmohan Roy (1772-1833). Already as a child he showed that to him religion was a reality and not a form of outward worship. He had to leave his home, because he could not reconcile the numerous ceremonies of orthodox Brahmanism with the craving of his spirit. He became homeless, and during his wanderings he tried to grasp the truth of all religion in intercourse with the particular religious conceptions of Buddhism, Hinduism and Christianity. When at length he was 32 years of age, he repeated with firm conviction the teaching of Krishna in the Bhagavadgita, that there is only one God, who is worshipped in all religions. At the same time he

did not fail to realise that there were also accretions and unessential elements in every religion, and that it might not be the case that every word in ancient sacred tradition was literally true. When he approached the age of 40, something happened in his nearest surroundings, which showed him that such was actually the case, even in India. His brother died, and his sister-in-law ascended the funeral pile and was burned to death with her husband's corpse. Rámmohan's heart ached as he felt that this ancient custom could not be in accordance with God's will.

Rámmohan Roy went to the scriptures, and he found that they did not authorise this rite of *Sati*. His eyes were opened. He knew from the history of Christianity that a reformation may sometimes be required, and he soon found that current Indian religion also might be in need of revision, in order that it might be purified and reformed. He did not, however, jump to the conclusion that it was fundamentally wrong, and though he was deeply impressed by Christianity, and especially by the personality of Jesus, he never suggested that his people ought to adopt the religion of Christ. On the contrary, he turned to the Upanishads and found in them the noblest and most exalted expressions of truth. He translated them into Bengali, and in this way, and through numerous other writings, he came to exercise a great influence on the development of the Bengali language, which is largely indebted to him for the high position it occupies to-day.

It might seem that such idea of a critical examination of sacred tradition could very well be of purely Indian origin, and it may be mentioned that Rámánuja did the same thing, when he went to the Brahmasûtras and the Bhagavatgîtá in order to prove his view of Eternal Reality. There cannot, however, be any doubt that Rámmohan was influenced by his knowledge of the history of Christanity. And his attitude is, after all, different from that of Rámánuja. He believed in one Truth and one God who was revealed in all religions, and he was quite prepared to turn to other scriptures, *e.g.*, the New Testament, for enlightenment about questions dealt with by the Upanishad. He did not feel himself bound to the letter, but always looked

for the spirit, and he knew perfectly well that not everything which is old, and has been accepted by generation after generation, must therefore necessarily be true.

Rámmohan Roy's attitude is, in a way, a revolt against the worship of authority, which has so often framed the religious mentality, not only in India but all over the world. The Buddha in his teaching also refused to recognise the authority of the Vedas. But then his case is entirely different. He believed that truth had revealed itself to him, in its purity; for immediate intuition has in India been considered, since the oldest times, as the highest realisation,—and he simply proceeded to expound the truth as he had seen it, and thus founded a new religion. Rámmohan did not lay claim to direct revelation. He was a man of the modern age, who used his own intelligence and his own heart as tests of the ancient scriptures, and in so doing he showed to his compatriots how the beliefs of their ancestors could be reflected in the modern mind and thereby be reborn; how the superstitions and later unworthy accretions could be eliminated therefrom, and yet the old fundamental notions held firm.

Every religious tradition abounds in things which the modern man cannot accept; nevertheless only the superficial critic will draw therefrom the conclusion that the religion itself is at fault. In the East as in the West there have been many who have made this mistake, and it is well for India that a man like Rámmohan became the leader of the modern development, when the influence of the West began to make itself felt in Indian thinking. He was too great a personality to be blinded by appearances, and he was too deeply imbued with Indian religiosity to become dazzled by the apparently more modern tenets of Christianity as preached in the 19th century. I am not sure that Rámmohan's importance has always been realised in India. I have been told that some people have found fault with him because he had come under the influence of European thought. Such critics, however, overlook the fact that religious ideas are not mathematical formulæ, with a meaning which has the same value at all times. There is progress and development in human civilisation, in which progress all the civilised peoples of the

world have their share. And religious ideas have also their life and their growth. The same formula does not mean the same thing to us as to our ancestors. Modern man is a child of his time, and his mental horizon can no longer be entirely shaped by the development within one single country.

Two alternatives open to Rámmohan were, either to accept the tradition as it was together with everything in it against which his inner self revolted, or to throw it overboard entirely. He could not do the former, and he was wise enough not to do the latter. He knew that a religious belief is not like a dress which can be worn or changed at will. With a thousand threads is the religious belief of to-day connected with inherited notions, which cannot be thrown away without injury to the deepest human feelings. Rámmohan therefore showed the way to a renewal of ancient Indian religiosity in a shape which is not repugnant to the modern mind, and though the precepts of Jesus may have brought more than one Indian over to the Christian camp, there are many more who have learnt from him to find rest and hope in the belief of their fathers.

Rámmohan was, as you all know, the founder of the Bráhma Samáj, which has not, it is true, many enrolled members, but which has nevertheless exercised an unexampled influence in Modern India. It has become one of the most important centres of those efforts which aim at creating a modern India, without severing connexion with the past. Rámmohan's successor, the noble and unselfish Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905), carried on the work begun by the founder and won new friends for the young movement. The purity of his life and the nobility of his character secured him a firm place in the estimation of his people, who still speak of him as the Maharshi. His religious mentality was of the same kind as Rámmohan's, and his conception of God, who should only be worshipped in the spirit, was unitarian in its wideness. But he was none the less thoroughly Indian, and he saw in the Upanishads the purest source of religious truth. He was still more convinced than his predecessor that Christianity could not give India what it needed, and on the whole his leadership meant a distinct strengthening of the national base of the Samaj.

It is of interest to take note of this, because it is typical of the whole development. Foreign elements may be assimilated, and there may be visible traces of a strong impulse from outside, but the Indian framework is so substantial that it overshadows the whole.

Still more interesting from this point of view is the third great leader of the Brahmo Samaj, Keshab Chandra Sen (1838-1884). He was not a thinker and philosopher of the same kind as Rámmohan and Debendranath. He was much more of an enthusiast, full of faith and emotional fervour. The ideals of the Brahmo Samaj had not only appealed to his intellect and reasoning, but made a still stronger impression on his heart and feelings. While serenity and exalted harmony are the outstanding features in his predecessors, it was the fervent enthusiasm and the emotional inspiration in Keshub Chandra which brought everybody who came into contact with him under the charm of his rich personality. Under Rámmohan the Vedic hymns were not chanted in the same room where low caste people were present, nor by other than orthodox priests. Keshub Chandra revolted against such restrictions. He would not wear the sacrificial thread, he began to officiate himself, and all were admitted to the service. His enthusiasm for reforms carried him further still. He founded the Calcutta College with English as the medium of instruction, and held that it was necessary to open the door for the ideas of the West, in the interest of the religious life of India, and he also advocated social reforms with zeal.

Gradually, Keshub Chandra's aims were modified. What was needed, was not simply a reformation and purification of the ancient Indian religion, but a new faith, and more definitely than his predecessors he thought it necessary to widen the horizon so as to take in religious truth as found in foreign systems. He asked his compatriots to hasten to the gospel of Christ, at the same time laying stress on the fact that the home of Jesus was Asia and not Europe, and in his *Slôkasamgraha* he included religious texts taken not only from Indian, but also from Christian, Muhammadan and Chinese sources. It was really a unitarian religion which he advocated and it would seem as if

we were here faced with a natural result of the contact between the East and the West : a creed based on the religious growth of the whole world and not limited to the spiritual realization of a definite people. Cosmopolitan enthusiasts would be likely to rejoice at the idea of such a result, and in the religious literature of European liberalism the Brahmo Samaj has played a considerable rôle, as a noble instance of a unitarian creed, based on lofty and sound ideals, which might be adopted by the whole human race. That was not however to be the destiny of the Brahmo Samaj. Outside of India it has not won proselytes, and in India itself its development seems to me to have been going steadily back towards Indian ideals.

Keshub Chandra finally became a mystic, a visionary, who received direct injunctions from God. He felt his own relationship with the seers of old, who had realised truth by direct intuition, and though he continued to praise Jesus with his old fervour, he also began to speak of the message of the Indian Mother : the idea of Sakti became living in him. Towards the end he began to look even on the current worship of the Indian people in a different light. He recommended pilgrimage and he dropped his opposition to the worship of images, because these were nothing else than symbols of the different aspects under which the Eternal One could be viewed. Though Keshub Chandra always remained a believer in the one God, it is thus evident that his conception of divinity more and more received an Indian colouring. There is only one God, but that does not mean the same thing as the warning given by Christians against believing in other gods besides their God. It is rather the idea of the Bhagavadgita, that the same eternal God reveals himself to man in all the different shapes in which the human mind has conceived divinity.

The development of the Brahmo Samaj, as this was evolved out of the intercrossing of Eastern and Western notions in the 19th Century, seems to me to teach us two different things.

In the first place a unitarian creed will naturally take its colouring from the spiritual atmosphere of the individual nation within which it gets a footing; and I would like to add that it can never become a living faith unless it does so, because it

will otherwise remain a mere formula, without the living contents which the emotional growth of a people brings about. I therefore think that every attempt at creating a really universal creed through a fusion of the religious ideals of the different peoples and civilisations will always result in failure.

In the second place I believe that we can draw the inference that a people like the Indian, with a long and rich spiritual development, has nothing to fear from the influence of foreign civilisations, and need not shut the door against Western ideas. They will not overgrow the national substratum, but may become like a looking glass, reflecting it in its purity, free from the impermanent accretions which have grown up through the vicissitudes of its historical development. It conduces only to the good of men to be rubbed against other men.

Besides, the policy of the closed door is not any more possible in the modern world. No nation can shut its eyes to the fact that there are other nations, with their different interests and ideals. Seclusion will lead to starvation, not only physically, but also spiritually. Just as we have to import foreign goods and adopt foreign inventions, we must also accept such thoughts and ideas as are useful for us. We must all the while, however, take care to maintain a certain equilibrium between exports and imports. A too great excess of the former is a sure sign of poverty.

But then the question presents itself whether we should accept as final the conclusions that there is little or no hope of uniting the ideals of the East and the West in a common creed, which may lead them on to exert themselves for the sake of higher and universal aims; and that, on the other hand, the time has passed when the individual peoples can carve out their destiny independently of the rest. The consequence of such an attitude of mind needs must be an acquiescence in the state of things which finally led to the great war: an embittered competition and struggle for material ends, and I know that there are people who believe that such would be the case in future, until the present social structure collapses.

But signs are not wanting which point in a different direction. We have learnt that there are, after all, numerous

things which are of common interest to all the nations of the world. And everywhere we seem to perceive a reaction against the materialistic conception of life and life's aims which are rapidly spreading in the past century and which had such a large share in the events that led to the great war. We hear how the Christian world is putting fresh energy into the work of spreading Jesus' gospel of peace; the Buddhists of the East have planned a world-wide propaganda for their religion; and Muslims hope to see Islam spread over the whole world. In all these movements we often see a tendency to adopt the methods in vogue in the past century: competition and struggle for supermacy. The immediate aim may not be, in this case, to acquire power and prosperity, but the main endeavour nevertheless is to win over as many people as possible to our special faith. And the question naturally presents itself: will not this spiritual competition repeat itself in the struggle for wealth and influence, as happened in the past century?

I well know that the leading idea in every kind of religious propaganda is the firm belief that one's own religion is the only one which can lead to final emancipation and bliss, and a fervent wish to open this way up for the whole human race. I also know that a great and well-established religion has a tendency to lay stress on certain tenets which cannot well be accepted by everybody in the same sense. Moreover, the history of religious struggles in the past is not calculated to reassure us in regard to the future. I do not think that we can rely more on the new creed, which has of late been preached as the only way to save the human race from the misery brought about by the mentality prevailing in the part,—I mean Bolshevism.

I do not overlook the fact that Russian Bolsheviks do not profess to conduct a religious propaganda, and they have often been represented as the enemies of religion. Nevertheless, their aims are essentially religious. Like the old Christians, and others they want to bring about the millennium, and believe that this can be achieved in this world, if only man can be filled with the right faith. The methods are also the same as in ancient forms of religious propaganda: suppression and force and terror. Bolshevism is a religion, but it is a return to the

primitive religious conception, according to which life's highest aims are prosperity and welfare in this world. It makes little difference that Bolshevism aims at bringing about the prosperity of the masses at the expense of the few, instead of *vice versa*. I firmly believe, therefore, that the Bolshevik gospel is just as little calculated to bring humanity what it needs, as was any of the struggles of the past, or any form of competition between the various religions which we may witness in the future.

But there is another way. Each people, each civilisation can make an attempt to purify its highest ideals, in the light of the spiritual aspirations of the others, and then all of them can join together in the promotion of such aims as are common to all. There must be no abandonment of individuality, nor must any individual be missing, because then the harmony would be incomplete, and for the same reason there must not be any patronage of one by another, but a free co-operation of civilisations and nations, where each is able and willing to give of its best. Each must be allowed to do so with all the weight of its individuality, a reservation which it becomes necessary to emphasise because we have become so accustomed to neglect those who cannot hold their own. This is the way pointed out by *Visva-bharati,* Rabindranath Tagore's gift to his nation and to humanity.

Visva-bharati has been described as an international university, but it is not meant to be an ordinary centre of research, like the old universities of Europe. Research is to be carried on with a human interest and without bias or prejudice. And the aim is partly of a practical kind : to train Indians to greater efficiency in agriculture and handicrafts, to teach them how to prevent and to combat diseases, etc. I should like to say in this place that I have been much impressed with the excellent work carried out in connexion with the Visva-bharati in its department of rural reconstruction, called Sriniketan, in Surul.

But this is only a part of the whole, and the leading idea is a much wider one. It has been evolved under the impression of the world-wide disaster brought about by the great war and the mentality which led to it, and it is the result of a fervent wish to create a new atmosphere in the world, as the only means

of avoiding a repetition of the disaster. Power and might cannot remain the highest aims of the peoples of the world. Man will never cease to strive for material prosperity, it is true, and his endeavours for such purposes will lead to material progress and further the development of human civilisation, as they have done at all times. But man must learn to understand that his own interests are intimately bound up with those of other human beings, and also that riches and wealth can never satisfy the innermost cravings of the heart. Its ultimate longing goes beyond them, towards the universal sphere of harmony and bliss, towards transcendency. And it is only this higher realisation which is able to sanctify life itself, and to make man feel that he has done justice to his innermost self, because he is not only an individual but also a man, with higher ideals and broader aims.

The Indian conception of what the Christians call God is based on the idea of eternal truth which manifests itself in everything that transcends phenomenal existence and changing actuality. It is truth, transcendent reality itself, which is the underlying notion. And this eternal truth is the ultimate reality in every individual, in every nation. Man must learn to realise this, and the first condition is that he must learn to acknowledge it in others. Respect for his fellow-beings and sympathy with their highest longings is the necessary condition of the Indian conception of divinity. Visva-bharati therefore tries to extend the mentality which meetes us in Indian *bhakti* so as to comprise the whole human world. It invites men from all parts of the globe to come together, in mutual respect and good-will, in order to learn to know each other, as human beings whose ideals may differ, but who all belong to one higher Unity.

But, as its Founder knows, this aim cannot be achieved unless each civilisation, each nation, is able to present its highest ideeals with all the strength and power of its individuality. The immediate aim of Visva-bharati must therefore be to strengthen the spiritual force of Asia and especially of India, so that its high value may become apparent to the whole world. That is necessary for the sake of India, as for that of the world which has shown a tendency to overlook what

is weak. While, therefore, I cannot help looking on the Visva-bharati as connected with the movement, which can at the present day be observed everywhere, for making India strong and powerful, it must not be lost sight of that the means aimed at is not to develop a spirit of contention and competition, but one of co-operation in order to widen man's horizon and teach him to look beyond the interests of the moment, and even those of the individual person and nation, towards the higher sphere where all men can meet, in mutual respect and good-will, for the promotion of the happiness of the whole world.

India, where the idea of *ahimsá* had its home, has her mission in the world, but cannot fulfil this unless she puts her own ideals, undiluted and unmixed,—such as are purely Indian—into the scales. She must remain *herself,* for the sake of the world, as well as for her own sake. For she must make certain that, in the harmonious concert of the world to which we look forward, her own tune is not missing.

It is a small beginning which has been made,—we who have worked in the Visva-bharati know that only too well. But we also know that spiritual ideas cannot die, if they are filled with truth. They will live and sprout, and when the powerful political constellations of the present day have crumbled to pieces, they will survive and shape the future. We confidently hope and we firmly believe that Rabindranath Tagore's ideal is an eternal truth, and not only a dream, that the day will come when the world will speak of him, not only as a poet, but still more as a prophet, and above all as a healer, who has laid the world under deep obligation in showing the way towards good will, towards harmony, towards peace.

# DADU THE MYSTIC.

*By* Tara Dutt Gariola.

There is difference of opinion as to the date of the birth and parentage of Dadu. According to Pandit Chandi Prasad, whose edition of Dadu seems the most authentic, Dadu was born in a Brahmin family at Ahmedabad on the 8th lunar day of Falgun Sambat 1601 (1544 A.D.)—that is to say 26 years after Kabir's death—and died in 1660 (1603 A.D.) at the age of 58. His father's name was Lodi Ram.

There is likewise very little authentic evidence about the early life of Dadu. According to the scanty information available, he was a weaver, or cotton cleaner by profession and belonged to the Kabir-panthi Vaishnav sect. He has reverentially referred to Kabir and his doctrines in several places in his essays and songs. There is a dispute regarding his Guru. According to Wilson, Dadu was fifth in descent from Kabir, and his Guru's name was Budhan, thus: 1 Kabir, 2 Kamal, 3 Jamal, 4 Vimal, 5 Budhan, 6 Dadu. According to Pandit Sudhekar Dube, he was only second in descent from Kabir, being the disciple of Kamal son of Kabir. But in his essay on the Guru, Dadu says that God himself placed his hand on Dadu's head and initiated him into his mysteries.

Dadu left about 52 disciples, out of whom twenty were famous and wrote mostly in imitation of Dadu's poems, the most famous of them being Sunderdas, a great Sanskrit scholar who wrote on various religious and moral subjects. A careful examination of the writings of these disciples has convinced me that though Dadu refers to Kabir with much reverence, as in the following words: "Kabir's words are true and it gives me supreme joy to hear them. They confer true happiness",—this does not necessarily show that he was in direct descent from Kabir.

Some anecdotes about Dadu serve to throw light on his character. Once Dadu had shut himself up in a grotto for meditation. Some one closed the door of the cave and kept him

confined there for over a week. When the door was opened Dadu, instead of being angry, blessed his tormentor saying that he was grateful to him for having kept him in a state of divine contemplation so long. On another occasion a mahommedan fanatic gave him a slap in the face. Dadu blessed him and expressed his concern lest, by hitting his head, the assailant's hand should have been hurt. This faculty of merging his own consciousness in that of others and the resulting forgiveness may compare with the character of Christ who prayed for the men who crucified him.

Dadu travelled far and wide in Northern India, the Punjab and Rajputana, preaching his doctrines, and singing his songs of divine love in the languages of the places he visited, which he picked up as he went along. His sayings are current in such different languages as Gujrati, Hindi, Punjabi, Jaipuri and Persian, over all of which he seems to have had great command. There are a few hymns of his in Sanskrit also. Dadu did not sit down to write his poems. He sang when in ecstasy, or when questioned on any subject. His disciples took down his words and subsequently arranged them in two classes: *Banis* or moral essays and *Sabdas* or hymns. The vrst consists of essays on moral and religious subjects, the second of hymns set to music. There are altogether 5,000 verses in both.

Before discussing the philosophy and religion of Dadu, it will not be out of place to give a brief summary of his teachings as found in these essays.

He says, "O Dadu, Ram is fathomless, his form and colour cannot be known. Faith in his name is the only way to know him. God's nature is love; it is his body and his very existence. Yea, it is his very colour." Dadu thus points out the practical way of knowing God: "Turn the mind inward and see the Atma within. There dwells the universal soul. See it there. Keep thy mind fixed there." Duality exists so long as there is egoism. No sooner does egoism vanish than duality likewise ceases to exist. The individual soul and the universal soul dwell together in the heart. When the soul sees God it becomes dissolved into Him. In the presence of God shines the light of millions of suns and

moons. The effulgence of the universal Lord is incomprehensible.

To attempt to express the bliss of God's vision is as futile as the effort of a dumb person to express a sweet taste. Philosophers become bewildered at the wondrous nature of God. God reveals himself only to the blessed few through his grace. In the fifth essay Dadu makes the following practical suggestions for the concentration of the mind. "Know God to be real wealth and then all other things will become unreal. Knowing this truth turn thy mind constantly towards the reality. Know God to be within thine ownself. Restrain the mind from going outward. Keep thy mind fixed on the in-dwelling spirit and sing his glory. Then the mind will begin to dance before God. By constantly fixing thy mind on him, thou wilt surely find him at last."

In the essay on Maya, Dadu says that the world is false and exhorts men to wean their minds from it and fix it on God, who alone is true. Just as by touching metal with an ordinary stone,—intead of the philosopher's stone,—it cannot be converted into gold, so the world is deluded by the worship of personal gods and forgets Rám who is in their own heart. Just as by making a sun of stone, darkness is not dispelled, so our ignorance cannot be removed without the true knowledge. People make idols of stones and call them the creator. They see not the truth and hence are drowned in the ocean of Maya. Brahma is one, while the countless beings are produced by the qualities of the body. It is no use visiting places of pilgrimage, when God is in one's own heart. If you wish to see God, worship him within your own heart with full devotion, shaking off all sense of duality.

Dadu belonged to the *Bhakti* school of Mediæval Hinduism. He was essentially a mystic and like his forerunners, Nanak Surdas who flourished in the latter half of the sixteenth century and his contemporary Tulsi Das (1532-1623), preached the doctrine of divine love. But while Surdas, Mira Bai and Tulsi Das belived in Krishna and Ram as the incarnations of God, and while their training and ideas lay more among the orthodox traditions and learning of Hinduism, that is not so

with Kabir, Nanak and Dadu, who while accepting the Hindu theological and spiritual principles—their notions of God, the soul and devotion,—based the authority and source of their faith in the heart of man, on its intimations and longings. Like the mystics of other countries they boldly criticised the formalism, ritualism, sectarianism and hypocrisy of their age and preached the doctrine of universal love. Their songs are outbursts at once of rapture and love for their fellow creatures. They explain in popular language and by means of homely similes, the great spiritual truths which they realised and the vision of God which they achieved and thus express in forceful and simple imagery the deepest metaphysical truths. As Dadu says, in his essay on the Eternal Word, 'The world is pregnant with divine truth, if one reflects on it.'

Reading Dadu's works over and over again, we find fresh joy and illumination at each reading, and are drawn towards the path of God. The words of Dadu are hardly capable of being translated into a foreign language. Their fine aroma evaporates and their divine music loses much of its magical effect in the process of translation.

Although Dadu was not learned in the modern sense, his power of intuition, which in its higher unfoldment becomes spiritual illumination, was great. This intuition, as defined by Ralph Waldo Trine, "is a function of the spiritual nature which conveys to the mind impressions and knowledge from the Divine centre of our being!" Dadu's language is simple and his style homely, but there is exquisite music in his words, which goes deep into the heart and vibrates there, producing ineffable joy and solace.

In the kingdom of God there is eternal bliss, the pairs of opposites do not exist there. There is neither sorrow nor suffering, neither desire nor hatred, neither doubt nor egoism. There the lover ever sings the glory of the beloved and is intoxicated with his love. There the lover dances with his Beloved and worships His feet. He hears God's most excellent words. There the trees bear the fruits of immortality. There the devotee is finally absorbed in his Beloved.

Dadu's philosophy is essentially practical. He avoids all

dogmas and metaphysical discussions, and gives practical hints how to follow the path of God. The most essential requisite is to purify the mind by keeping it fixed on Hari and doing good to others. Dadu lays the greatest emphasis on the cultivation of divine love. Just as the *Chátak* caries for rain and the fish dies without water, so dies a devotee yearn to see Hari.

God's devotee should be meek, he should be free from egoism, passion and distress. He should concentrate his mind on God alone as the *summum bonum* of life. But it is not necessary to retire from the world. In fact Dadu condemns that in severe language. The true worship of Hari is in the heart, whether you live at home or go abroad. Ceremonials, pilgrimages, and penances lead to egoism. The best way to seek God is to withdraw one's own heart and worship him there in quiet.

Dadu accepts the orthodox doctrine that the whole cosmos has been produced from OM—the eternal Aye—and will be finally dissolved into it. This body is like a musical instrument and the OM is the sound which it gives out. The eternal Aye created the five senses through which it vibrates. What woundrous music the Lord has created! By meditating on the Eternal Word, and doing good deeds and worshipping Rama in his heart, man crosses this ocean of Maya.

Dadu's conception of Mukti or emancipation is absorption in God, in spirit, in this very life. He does not believe in the release after death. Dadu's definition of release is the true union of a lover with his beloved. He says God's devotee and God are one in essence. Such a release necessarily involves the disappearance of individuality and complete absorption in God.

According to Dadu, the mind assumes various forms and experiences and countless sensations of pain and pleasure within itself everyday, under the influence of its qualities. All the various forms which man is said to assume in succession according to his actions, such as a pig, dog, jackal, tiger, or snake, are merely the different phases of the mind according to its quality. So long as the mind remains a victim to those

influences of its qualities, the cycle of rebirth continues. The transmigration of the mind ceases only when it is fixed to God and goes not elsewhere. This theory of transmigration is peculiar to Dadu, though not in conflict with the orthodox Hindu doctrine.

Closely connected with trasmigration is the doctrine of Karma. Dadu lays great stress on the performance of actions as means of purifying the mind. Dadu extols the virtue of benevolence. Disinterested action is one of the chief pillars of his religion. Dadu spent his whole life in serving humanity by preaching and personal example. He loved Hindus and Muhammadans, high and low, alike, as being the handiwork of his beloved Ram. He showed practically that man can realise the highest spiritual truths without renouncing the world.

Dadu was opposed to the founding of a new religion. His chief mission was to reform and purify the existing religions. His disciples and successors, however, founded a new sect called "Dadupanthis". Dadu has summed up his religion thus: I follow the path which is free from duality and believe in the One without form. I like to look upon all as one and think all as my ownself. Cherish no desire in thy heart and love the supreme Brahm. In another hymn, the Lord discloses to Dadu the principle of true religion in the following concise words: 'Effacement of self; worship of Hari; purity of body and mind: love of all beings as thine ownself: O Dadu, this is the essence of true religion.'

Although born in troublous times of political upheaval and religious persecution, Dadu preached his immortal doctrine of universal love to all alike, entirely unaffected by his environment. His high spiritual vision made him indifferent to the surroundings. His overflowing love of his God and humanity made him kiss the hand that smote him. He saw his beloved Lord in all beings, high and low alike, whom he loved like his ownself. His life was dedicated to the service of all beings. Nay, he wished his body to be of use to birds and beasts even after death.

We append below a few of his characteristic songs in free translation:

*Batohi, chalna aj ki kali.*

O, traveller, sooner or later thou must start upon thy journey,
Why considerest thou not? Why sleepest thou at ease?
O, heart, take refuge in Ram.

1. As the bird percheth on the twig of a tree to rest for a moment, so do men spread all their wares on the stall of this world; and soon make their exit one by one.

2. There is no real friend of thine in this world: lose not the wealth of thy heart (for the sake of any such):

Let not this world deceive thee.
It is like the flowers of the silk-cotton tree.

3. Neither this body nor riches are thine, why dost thou hug them?

Dadu saith: Thou canst not rest in peace without Hari: awake and see.

*

*Sajni rajni ghatti jai.*

O maiden, the night is passing away:
It decreaseth every moment, until, it is day-break:
Reconcile thyself to thy Beloved.

1. Why sleepest thou so long and so peacefully?

The opportunity is passing. If thou miss him in this life how canst thou find him again?

Afterwards thou shalt have to repent.

2. O Fair One, why dost thou sleep whilst the Lord awaketh?

Arise, repent and grasp His feet.

Approach the merciful God with supplications; and embrace him from head to foot.

3. How fortunate is the bride who is blessed with the increasing love of her Bridegroom.

Dadu saith: She alone is thrice blessed, who hath found her Lord, the King of all kings.

*

*Kabahun aisa birah pawe.*

Ah! oft do I long so for my Beloved that I am like to die unless I see Him.

1. O maiden, harken to the tale of my agony.

I am restless without my Beloved.

As the fish tosseth about without water, so do I find no repose without the Beloved.

2. In my intense desire for the Beloved I break into song day and night, I pour out my woes like the singing bird.

Ah! who will take me to my Beloved?
Who will show me His path and console my heart?

Dadu saith: O Lord, let me see Thy face, even for a moment, and be blessed.

*

*Panthire bujhe birhani kahani pio ki bat.*

Saith the Lover: Tell me, O traveller, about my Beloved.
O traveller, when will He come home and meet me?

1. O traveller, where dwelleth my Beloved?
Where shall I seek Him? and where shall I find Him?
Where and with whom doth He live? and what doth He do? Tell me, O traveller.

2. O traveller, where shall I see my Darling?
Take me unto Him who sustaineth my life.

3. Gentle sleep kisseth not her weary eyes,
She tosseth about restless, day and night.

Dadu saith: How can the uneasy lover find peace in the hours of the night?

*

*Gawahu mangal char.*

I will celebrate this auspicious day with joyful songs: my dream hath been realised; my Beloved hath retuned home.

1. All the maidens, with pitchers of faith, filled with the water of love, on their heads, are wending their way, singing, All hail! O Lord of the Universe.

2. His body shineth through and through in the infinite glory of millions of suns.

The lover seeth the home-coming of her Lord with a buoyant heart.

3. The fair maiden adorneth her body and cometh into the presence of her Lord, saying, "My Beloved hath come to my house; I will offer my body and my soul to Him".

4. The Unconditioned, Glorious, Supreme God appeareth in human form and danceth merrily, as the lover singeth His glory.

5. The Bridegroom cometh to meet His Bride and embraceth her.

Dadu saith: The fair maiden was right glad and became dyed in His ever-lasting colour.

*

Thus saith the Holy God, the Creator and Author of all that is good, I and my devotees are one—we are One in essence.

1. He giveth up everything for my sake, he ever meditateth on the Infinite and respecteth the name of the Blessed Lord.

2. He cannot live with veil drawn between; he fainteth instantly, like a fish which dieth without water; but reviveth again when the waters return.

3. As water mingleth with milk; or water with water; as salt dissolveth in water; so doth the individual soul mingle with the Universal; no duality remaineth then.

*

*Hari nam dehu niranjan tera.*

O Hari, give me faith devotion and love of Thy holy name: let my heart overflow with Thy love.

1. Give me gentleness in speech and meekness. Let me enjoy the elixir of Ram's name.

2. Give me renunciation, detachment, devotional love, purity of heart and truthfulness.

Give me the thought-gem of devotion to Thy feet.
May I hold them firmly in my heart.

3. Give me contenment and modesty; let my heart be firmly fixed in Thee.

O Thou, the Indwelling Spirit, awaken my heart and let it be in communion with Thee.

4. O Mohan, give me knowledge and contemplation: let my heart have constant communion with Thee.

Dadu saith: O merciful God, let Thy supreme Light shine in my heart.

*

*Jai Jai Jagdish Hari.*

All hail! O Lord of the Universe, Thou are Omnipotent. Thou createst and destroyest the whole Universe: there is none other save Thee.

1. O Lord, Time and Death implore Thy mercy and Yama, (the Lord of death) is the bondsman of Thy Maya.

2. All-devouring Death feareth Thee; my heart is in great fear.

3. All those that fetter us with the snares of this world tremble before the Creator, Who destroyeth the enemies that are within and without us, Who comforteth us and removeth all obstacles from our path.

4. The Lord watcheth over us; He is also within us:

Dadu saith: The servant of Ram is free from all dangers and feareth none.

*

*Sain ko sanch piyara.*

The Lord loveth the truth:
Truth is agreeable to the true:
The Creator alone is true.

1. The hammer-stroke forges the real metal, while the dross drops off.

The true metal alone can bear the hammer-strokes; while the baser metal breaks down.

2. As by assaying gold in fire, all the alloy is burnt away, so the Real alone can endure the test but not the unreal.

3. As by heating butter in fire and boiling it, the essence alone remaineth, while all the impurity burneth away, so truth alone can endure the ordeal—the true will safely pass through it.

Dadu saith: Verily the truthful alone can see God, but not the false.

*

*Aj hamare Ramji sadh ghar aye.*

My Ramji hath come to this beggar's house today.

1. Everywhere there is rejoicing and festivity.

2. I will raise a platform and strew it with pearls; and grind the sandal paste for Him.

3. I will offer my body, mind and wealth to Him: I will walk reverentially round Him.

4. By service, devotion and the waving of lamps will I propitiate Him.

5. I will offer my head to him as a sacrifice. With faith and devotion will I drink of His love.

6. O friend! I am happy, for I have found the Ocean of Bliss.

Dadu saith: I have seen the Great One, and found the Lord of the three Worlds.

*

*Chalo man mera jahan mitra hamara.*

O heart, hie thee to where my friend dwelleth: there, birth and death are unknown.

1. There is neither attachment nor ignorance, neither mine nor thine: there is no round of birth and death. There, the soul is not encaged in the body and doth not die. Time worketh no change and life is not shortened there.

2. In that region of immortality the immortal Beings dwell. Disease and sorrow are unknown there.

3. It is the Kingdom of God; there none quarrel or run away; they enjoy eternal peace.

Dadu saith: The absolute Holy God alone existeth there; He alone is my friend.

*

*Tahan ape ap Niranjana.*

There, the God absolute dwelleth by Himself.
There day and night do not meet.

1. There is neither earth nor sky; neitner the sun nor shade There is neither air nor water; there is the Omniscient alone.

2. There the sun and the moon do not rise; and death bloweth not her trumpet. There pain and pleasure cannot enter. His dwelling place is unapproachable and unseen.

3. There, death cannot affect the body; and none sleepeth or awaketh there.

4. There neither virtue nor vice exist: there the unknown Absolute Being alone dwelleth.

5. There the Lord, who pervadeth all hearts dwelleth in peace.

Dadu saith: Meditate on Him, who filleth all space, at the confluence of the three streams.

*

*Tuhi mere rasna.*

Thou alone are the taste of my tongue.
Thou art the tongue, ears and eyes.

1. Thou are the soul within the body: Thou art the mind; Yea, Thou art my all in all.

Thou alone dwellest in my heart, and in my breath; Thou art the life within my body.

2. Thou fillest my whole body from top to toe; Thou fillest my heart like water.

3. I have none but thee.

Dadu saith: Thou alone art the life within me.

*

*Rahasi eku pawan-hara.*

The Creator alone will endure ; though the whole world pass away.

1. The sky and the earth will pass away; also the air and water.

The sun and moon will pass away, the whole universe will pass away.

2. Day and night will pass away; yea, even Yama's abode will pass away.

Cruel death will also pass away; this whole universe will pass away.

3. Heaven and Hell will pass away; and all the dwellers therein also will pass away.

All joy and sorrow will pass away; our poor actions too will pass away.

4. The unstable passeth while the stable endureth, yea, the whole creation will pass away.

Dadu saith: Verily, the Indestructible alone will survive; while the rest will crumble like a pot of clay.

*

*Aisa tatt anupam, bhai.*

O brother such is that incomparable Essence;

It neither dieth; nor can anyone kill it: Death devoureth it not.

1. Fire cannot burn it, the sword cannot cut it, and force cannot move it.

2. The unconditioned cannot change;

It is not affected by heat, cold or water; it rusteth not.

3. It is neither reduced to dust nor is it dissolved in the thin air:

The one changeless essence filleth all space.

4. Such is the incomparable Essence:

Dadu saith: Why dost thou not take refuge in Hari?

*

*Tako kahe na pran sambhale.*

O listen, why dost thou not take refuge in His name?

The millions of sins, which have gathered round thee during the countless ages shall be washed away by it in a moment.

1. The fetters which have tied thee for innumerable lives shall be burnt down by it without fire.

O hear me, such is the name of Hari: No pain can torment him who repeateth it.

2. That thought-gem will protect thee with tender care as that wherewith the mother reareth her child.

Dadu saith: Verily, such is the grace of His Name; The snares of men are destroyed by it.

*

*De darasan dekhan tera.*

O Lord, let me see Thy face; then will my heart be in peace.

O Lord, Thou knowest my agony; how can I hide it from Thee? My heart knoweth no peace until I see Thee.

1. O Lord, my heart acheth: how shall I rid me of the pain?
O Lord, stretch out Thy helping hand to me.

2. O Lord, every part of my body is in pain. Why dost Thou torment my soul which dieth already.

3. O Lord, I lie alone on this bed and yearn to see Thee.

*

*Allah Ram chhuta bhram mora.*

The illusion of Allah and Ram hath been dispelled from my mind; Since I see Thee in all I see no difference between Hindu and Turk.

1. Both have the same soul, body, blood, flesh, eyes and nose: they are all the handiwork of the Lord.

2. Both hear with their ears, and taste with their tongues, both feel hungry and are endowed with the same intelligence.

3. Both have similar likes and dislikes; and both feel pain and pleasure alike.

4. O Creator, O Hari, all this is Thy handiwork; Thow makest no distinction.

Dadu saith: Knowing this truth my mind is in peace.

*

*Bhaire gharhi men ghar paya.*

O Brother, I have found my real home within this very tabernacle.

God pervadeth it in every part. The true Guru hath shown the path which leadeth unto it.

1. I have searched the whole house; I have seen the Self within the self. The doors of his Tabernacle have been thrown open; and the Everlasting Place hath been revealed.

2. Fear, difference and doubt have all disappeared; and my mind is fixed on the Truth.

God dwelleth at the place where the soul passeth beyond the body.

3. He is unchangeable and immovable; Him have I seen in all.

I have set my heart on Him alone; there is none other but He.

Him alone have I found to be the beginning and the final rest; my mind goeth not elsewhere now.

Dadu hath been dyed in His colour alone and is absorbed in Him.

*

*Mulsinnohe badhe jyun bela.*

Dadu will find a blessing in offering himself as a sacrifice to Thee.

Water the root, then the creeper will grow.

That quint essence—the tree in itself—dwelleth alone.

1. Those who go about visiting various gods and goddesses and are puffed up by drinking the poison of desires, wish for pleasures, but in reality have their necks caught in the noose,—the Diamond soon slippeth out of their hands.

2. Some worship with much ceremonial and concentrate their minds; they see the image alone; but know not the truth.

They pluck leaves but know not the right method of offering them.

In this wise are the selfish led astray.

3. They go on pilgrimages and keep fasts; but cannot subdue their desires; they go to forests; but even there they are not happy.

Thus do they consume their bodies by performing various kinds of penances; they wander about restless and waste their lives.

4. Doubt cannot be removed without the help of the true Guru: Yea, He breaketh down all snares.

Dadu saith: Verily, when the Guru showeth God within the self, the Supreme state is realised.

## THE WREATH OF VICTORY.

The young pilgrim's eyes shone
like a lamp in a lonely temple,
while he sat silent at the foot of the throne
and picked up casual petals
dropped from the rose in the Queen's hair.
I sang to her songs that were like a shower of meteors,
like a summer gale bursting in passionate rain,
till she crowned me with the wreath of Victory.

The envious crowd dispersed at the day's end.
I spoke to the young pilgrim:
"Why linger by the throne
when the time for lighting of the lamp is at hand?"
"My service to my Queen has no end," he answered,
"for I have surrendered to her my wreath of Victory."

**Rabindranath Tagore.**

# THE DYNAMIC ELEMENT IN INDIAN RELIGIOUS DEVELOPMENT.

By Prof. Carlo Formichi.

## I.

I have been teaching Sanskrit in Italy these twenty-five years, and in order to avoid the risk of finding no auditors I was compelled, through the whole of my career, to make the study of Sanskrit both easy and attractive. I had every year to start from the teaching of the *devanágri* alphabet, and thereupon to select texts that might arouse the interest of my hearers. I must grant that, in spite of my love for the Indian classical language and literature, it was a hard sacrifice to be obliged to repeat over and over again the elementary rules of grammar and to have to deal always with beginners.

My sacrifice, however, as is the case with every sacrifice, did not fail to get its reward, for I never knew the sad sensation of lacking eager disciples, and I am proud to say that not less than five distinguished scholars who hold at present University Chairs for Sanskrit in Italy, were one day my pupils : Professor Ballini and Professor Pizzagalli at Milan, Professor Belloni-Filippi in Pisa, Professor Tucci and Professor Rocca in Rome. This result encourages and convinces me that I must not change my method and that on going back to my country I shall have to resume my wonted work of bringing up beginners and of sowing over and over again the same seeds. "How poor," says Shakespeare, "are those that have not patience."

Still, you may easily imagine, my friends, what relaxation it is for me to have no need for patience, at least for this one year. Here I am among you who are not beginners, but more or less advanced students in Sanskrit, some of you even Sanskrit scholars of the first order. I have not to start from the alphabet, but I am allowed to speak about the ultimate results of my scientific researches. Do not expect from me discoveries of new texts or an exhibition of vast scholarship. I shall limit

myself to interpret well-known texts on which I have meditated for long years, and let me tell you at once that meditation, namely, penetration into the heart of a subject, has been and will ever be what appeals most to my nature.

My thankfulness for those that gather raw materials, or put them in order, knows no bounds; for without collectors of facts science would never advance. But, at the same time, this collecting of facts must have an end at a certain point, whereupon quite another kind of work becomes indispensable. Just as a Beethovian symphony reveals its inmost harmonious secrets only gradually, so that the more frequently it is heard the more one is able to discover them, even so must a hymn of the Rigveda or of the Atharvaveda, or a passage of an Upanishad be the object of long and repeated meditations before one can hope to understand them thoroughly.

There is an intense knowledge that cannot absolutely be a broad knowledge. This intense knowledge is what the Chandogyopanishad calls the *alpavidyá chittavatî*, and I acknowledge that my motto is the beautiful passage of the same Upanishad:

**Yadyapi bahuvid achitto bhavati náyam astîtyevvainam áhur yad ayam veda, yadvá'yam vidvánnettham achittah syád ity, atha yady alpavich chittaván bhavati tasmá evota susrûshante chittam hyavaishám ekáyanam chittam átmá chittam pratisthá chittam upasveti (VII, 5, 2).**

*Let a man know a great deal: if, however, he has not insight, they say of him: "he is worth nothing, in spite of all he knows; for were he really a sage, he would not thus be lacking insight." On the other hand, let a man know only a little: if he has but insight, they listen to him; for insight is the meeting point of those (things we were speaking of), insight is the Self, insight is the prop; insight thou hast to worship.*

The result of my meditation on well-known texts is, that there has always been in India a dynamical factor in the history of her religious thought, a factor that saved her from falling a victim to any tyranny of mechanical rites or philosophical systems and allowed her to go through all possible religious experience until the summit of wisdom was reached in the

Upanishads and in Buddhism. The lectures I intend delivering to you will, I hope, give you the proof of the existence of this dynamical factor.

There is no doubt that your most ancient book is the Rigveda, and that we have to start from it. And just at the outset, we are confronted by a very serious problem : the age of the Rigveda. We cannot assign to it any definite date, and western scholars cannot forgive India her lack of historical sense. What Indian tradition can say about the age of the Rigveda is simply this : that it was composed in the year 3102 before Christ, at the beginning of the Kaliyuga.

Instead of positive and ascertained facts India is always ready to offer a legend, a myth, poetical and imaginative reports. Not even a single name represents the historical author of a Rigvedic hymn. Visvamitra, Vasistha, Atri, Agastya etc. are all mythical names. The hymn No. 104 of the 9th mandala is said to have been composed by two *Apsarás*! Is it possible to find out historical evidence in such a jungle of fantastic statements?

How is India to be studied and understood? Have we to accept her as she is or shall we force her to say what she has not said and wanted not to say? Western science did not hesitate a moment and, so far as concerns the Rigveda, did at once try to bring in history and displace myth, fix figures and numbers where these are lacking, remove shade through light. Western science said : India will learn the historical and critical method from us and will have to apply to us to understand the riddle of her Sphinx.

Nothing can be more interesting than this kind of duel between dreaming India, that looks at things *sub specie æternitatis,* independently of time and space, and the western hemisphere busy collecting, ordering and interpreting the facts of reality.

The weapons used by western scholars were formidable and of the purest steel : the historical and critical method, the comparative criterion, the turning to account of every detail, of all possible hints. How much time is likely to have elapsed in the linguistic evolution from the Vedic dialect to classical

Sanskrit and from the religious Rigveda notions to the tenets of early Buddhism, how the long debated question of the *nakshatras* which are mentioned in the Jyotisam is to be solved, how and when was writing first employed in India,—these and other problems were attacked with an enormous amount of scholarship, methodical accuracy, wonderful patience and acumen.

Accordingly, Max Muller detected that four periods are to be distinguished in Vedic literature: Sûtras, Bráhmanas, Mantras, Chhandas; and that between each of these periods and the preceding one an interval of nearly 200 years is to be conjectured. Taking the historical date of Buddha's death as the terminus *ad quem*, namely the year 480 before Christ, we reach retrospectively the date of 1,200 for the ancient hymns of the Rigveda. Max Muller's conjectures aroused a great deal of criticism, but, in the main, western science accepted his conclusions. After much discussion the Rigveda has gained three hundred years more backwards, so that the term of 1,200 has receded to 1,500.

Professor Oldenberg, who is one of the greatest authorities in Europe for Vedic studies, writes in his *Religion des Veda* that 1,500 is the remotest date to be assigned to the Rigveda though, he honestly adds, all our calculations are wholly uncertain. Professor Oldenberg acknowledges that Western calculations are wholly uncertain, but still they have a certain weight for him, while the Indian legend of the outset of the *Kaliyuga* as the date of the Rigvedic hymns seems to be of no value at all in his opinion, for he does not even mention it. The calculations of science, even if uncertain, are always to be taken seriously, while myths are myths and are to be completely overlooked.

The patient researches and the stupendous labours of Western philologists are to be highly praised and wondered at. On this point there cannot be the least doubt. Wherever work and self-denial are, merit and greatness are likewise there. Still one cannot help realising the disproportion between the huge effort that has been made and the meagre results that have been earned. After so much labour, so many subtle discussions,

inductions and conjectures, the date of 1,500 assigned by science to the Rigveda is as uncertain as that of 3102 of the Indian tradition. The latter, moreover, satisfies our inmost intuition much better than the first.

Professor Ludwig rightly maintains that for what concerns the Veda we are not allowed to go beyond the generic statement that it belongs to a remote antiquity and that we lack every *terminus a quo*. We add that there is absolutely nothing to give validity to Max Muller's conjecture that an interval of 200 years is to be assumed between Sûtras and Bráhmanas, Bráhmanas and Mantras, Mantras and Chhandas. The Indian mythical date of 3102 is almost to be taken more seriously than those arbitrary 200 years propounded by Max Muller.

A legend is always of more worth than a scientific endeavour to determine forcibly what is absolutely repugnant of any determination whatsoever. We lack any meter for measuring, even approximately, the number of years that must have elapsed from the Vedic dialect to classical Sanskrit, and from Vedic religion to Buddhism. There are too many psychological elements that assert themselves in all these questions, and the psychological elements do not admit of any measurement.

All the voice and the ink squandered on the question of the *nakshatras* and of the introduction of writing in India have hardly brought any light. As to the introduction of writing, Professor Buhler, of whom I am proud to have been the disciple, writes that Indians still prize the word which is spoken, much more than that which is written, the *mukhasthá vidyá* much more than the *pustakasthá vidyá,* even to-day, and that Indian modern poets do not so much wish to be read as to know that their poems have become the ornament of the throats of good people (*satám kanthabhúshana*). But even if we knew something quite definite on the date of writing in India,—that would take us no step further into the question of the age of the Rigveda.

In the duel, then, between dreaming India and waking West, the incorrigible dreamer has won. She has scorned and refused to be historically disciplined; she has remained in the atmosphere of mystery she likes so much; she seems proudly

to say: "If you want to discover and understand me, try to adapt yourselves to me rather than force me to adapt myself to you; give up the infatuation of trying to know everything historically, and then, only then, I am likely to lift my veil a little."

There is another point which deserves attention before attempting to detect and follow the dynamical element in the ancient religious thought of India. Our western civilisation has succeeded in separating religion from philosophy, philosophy from science, science from literature, and so on. We possess books that deal exclusively with one branch of knowledge: we call a man a theologian, or a philosopher, or a scientist, or a man-of-letters. But if we open the Rigveda, or a Bráhmana, or an Upanishad, we find religion, philosophy, science, literature all blended together, so that we are at a loss to give the proper name to the author of a hymn,—we wonder whether we have to call him a poet or a theologian, a thinker or a rhetorician.

Our western civilisation has banished all that is superstition and quackery from its scientific and literary production, whereas on the contrary, all Vedic works are a mixture of a few sublime thoughts and truths and of an infinite deal of nonsense and imposture. Even the Mahábhárata, the Puránas, the Canonical books of Buddhism and Jainism, the Sástras dealing with law, medicine and science, have all their gold almost hidden in a mass of dross. How are we, then, to use the Vedic religious materials? Shall we think that any of the so numerous Rigvedic hymns full of absurdities, inconsistencies and liturgic whims, is entitled to represent Indian thought no more no less than the *purusha,* or the *násadîya-sûkta*? Or are we to give a preponderance to these two *sûktas* and deem that we have to judge India from the exception rather than from the rule?

There is no denying the fact that on reading some Rigvedic or Atharvan hymns one cannot help discovering a close relationship between some absurd Vedic notions and customs and some analogous beliefs and practices of primitive and savage peoples. But, fortunately, you have hardly got to the end of those wretched compositions, before you chance to meet a hymn full

of lofty thoughts and of such deep poetical feeling as is not to be surpassed by any other exquisite piece of poetry of ancient or modern civilised peoples.

I think that these precious evidences, though few, must be quite enough to condemn as unfair and insulting every attempt aiming at reducing ancient India to the same level with primitive and savage peoples. Modern western nations might as well be compared with primeval clans, if all the superstitions, wrong notions and absurd customs of their country-people, concerning religion, medicine and interpretation of natural phenomena, should find admittance into their scientific and literary books. The official literature of western nations is the offspring of only a few cultivated and selected minds and is far from representing the main body of notions and beliefs of the bulk of the people.

In Indian literature the separation of what is mere gossip from the revelations of genius is quite unknown; and thus, from a certain point of view, Indian literature is more sincere than any literature in the world, and is nearer nature,—just as a wood is nearer nature than a garden. The similarity to be found between many Indian rites and the ceremonial practices of savages might be detected also in the most advanced nations of the West if only these, like India, had the habit of keeping their gold mixed up with the dross. That a common psychological basis is to be found in man, independently of his being civilised or not, is a fact not to be controverted; but it is to go too far if, from this fact, we infer a derivation of the civilised man from the savage.

Man hardly distinguishes himself from a monkey in the bodily structure, and this similarity led science, not many years ago, to state that man was nothing else than an evolved monkey. The fallacy of such a theory was not long in being confuted, and now-a-days nobody any longer believes that he is derived from a baboon, for man has got that in himself which the monkey never had, nor ever could develop even in *yugas* of evolution. Likewise the Indians have got that in themselves which, even in its embryonic stage, no savages were ever endowed with. I shall be ready to acknowledge the derivation of ancient Indians from primitive peoples the day that I shall

be shown the seeds of the *purusha,* or the *násadiya-sûkta,* in any notion or belief or rite of savages.

I have to make some other general remarks on the Rigveda before getting into the heart of my thesis.

We have said that the Rigveda is the most ancient book of India, but we have to add that it is the least representative of what we are used to mean by the word *India.* Rightly to know the place that we are to assign to the Rigveda it is necessary to point out first what it does *not* contain.

Can one conceive India without tigers, elephants or monkeys? And yet the tiger is never mentioned in the Rigveda, the elephant is spoken of as a rarity in only two passages (I, 64, F; IV, 16, 14), the monkey in one hymn only (X, 86). Can one conceive India without *nyagrodhas,* lotuses, or rice? The Rigveda wholly ignores the *nyagrodha,* gives no prominence at all to the lotus, never mentions the rice (*vrîhi*).

The most striking fact is that the Ganges, which represents the very blood of India, faintly appears only once in the Rigveda (Vi, 45, 31) and never in the Sáma, Yajur or Atharvaveda. We are tempted to ask : can a literary record be called Indian when it almost ignores the Ganges? I need not tell you what the Ganges is for India and to remind you of the more than hundred *slokas* in Parvan XIII of the Mahábhárata, apotheosising it. I myself, who am only an Indian by the love I bear to this land of divine mystery and of human bounty, felt as one purified when at Kolaghat, near Calcutta, in the light of a glorious *ushas* never to be forgotten, the breeze that had come in contact with the sacred waters first blessed my skin. As are nights without the moon, trees without their flowers, so are the lands that lack *Ganga's* sacred waters. And let me frankly tell you that of all the Indian books the Rigveda is the one that appeals the least to my heart, and which seems to lack in the peculiar charm of India. The Rigveda is a book without the Ganges!

How little the Rigveda can be called genuinely Indian is, moreover, shown by the absence in it of the social institution of castes and, above all, by its ignorance of two words which represent the greatest religious conquests of India, *viz., samsára* and *ahimsá.* And when I say *samsára* I mean to say *karma,*

the widest idea ever conceived by the human mind, for it embraces the material as well as the spiritual world and is as infinite as the infinite of which it proclaims the eternal law.

The Rigveda ignores the Ganges, ignores the universal and everlasting force of *karma,* sustainer of *samsára,* ignores the eternal law of *ahimsá*, universal love. Does, then, the Rigveda deserve to be called Indian?

Some scholars have concluded that the Rigveda is not an Indian, but an Aryan, book and this is why it lacks all that is specifically Indian. They seem to forget the close relationship between the Vedic dialect and classical Sanskrit and to overlook the true reasons that account for the absence of any mention of the tiger, the elephant, the Ganges, and so on. In the time of the Rigvedic hymns the Indians were dwelling in that northern part of the country where the Indus flows. They could not, accordingly, know the Ganges and all the beasts belonging to a tropical climate. The geographical factor is paramount in determining, not only the social and political conditions of a people, but also their religious beliefs. Indians settled on the banks of the Indus had a religion which could not possibly be the same as what they had when settled on the banks of the Ganges and in the still hotter districts of the Deccan. The Indians of the Rigvedic period could not help being a war-like people living on cattle-rearing more than on agriculture, making the most of this life, and begging of the gods as the greatest boon a fair and good wife and as many male-children as possible.

Which are their gods and how did they worship them?

Thomas Carlyle says that if a man were brought up from infancy in a dark cave and then all of a sudden taken into this glorious world to see the sun rise, he would undoubtedly fall on his knees in adoration before the divine spectacle. Now, if we read some of the hymns to Ushas, we are much tempted to think that the Rigvedic man experienced just the same thrilling and intoxicating sensation as the man of whom Carlyle speaks. He had no prejudices, no scientific formulæ that could shut him out from the spontaneous adoration of dawn and sun, stars and moon, cloud and lightning, water and earth, fire and plants

mysteriously endowed with thought-stimulating, disease-curing or courage-inspiring juice. In fact his gods were called *Ushas Sûrya, Varuna, Indra, Apas, Prithivî, Agni, Soma.* Accordingly, Roth, Adalbert Kuhn and Max Muller saw in the Rigvedic religion a worship of the principal forces of nature; and the only question for them was to decide whether gods personifying phenomena of light had a preponderance on those personifying meteorological phenomena, or *vice versa.* This was the first western interpretation of the Rigvedic religion.

But as the studies of Vedic texts became broader and deeper, it was universally admitted that many an obscure passage in the Rigveda had to receive light from the knowledge of the complicated, and in many parts absurd and mechanical, liturgic worship of which the Bráhmanas are the repositories. In the Rigveda there is not so much a question of inspiring, beautiful, natural phenomena as of sacrificial spoons, libations of clarified butter, fees to the priests (*dakshiná*), magic formulæ, and so on. In other words, in the Rigvedic religion the priest has already asserted his authority, has already succeeded in introducing the static principle aiming at crystallizing religion into a monotonous system of mechanical rites. This was the second Western interpretation of the Rigveda, and Abel Bergaigne in France and Hermann Oldenberg in Germany heaped up such a mass of facts and of brilliant conjectures as to put out of question the ritual character of the Rigvedic religion.

But, as it always happens, reason was not entirely on one side. Emboldened by the successful results of their method, both Bergaigne and Oldenberg busied themselves exclusively with the static element, and nearly forgot the dynamic one. They go so far as not to forgive the Ushas-hymns the responsibility of the wrong notions entertained until then about the Rigvedic religion.

Bergaigne writes in the first volume of *La Religion Védique* (page 242): "Les hymnes a' l' aurore sont presque tous au nombre des plus poétiques que renferme le Rigveda. Ce sont même eux qui paraîssent avoir le plus contribuè à rèpandre dans le public les idées fausses qu' on y nourrit sur le caractère

général du recueil." * On the other hand Oldenberg writes a big volume of 608 pages in which he lingers on the description of every possible superstitious rite, while scarcely three pages are dedicated to poor Ushas.

And thus, from the exaggerations of the first western Vedic school we are led to those of the second one. I think, however, that the scholars who busy themselves chiefly with offering us the rubbish of the Rigveda and nearly hide from us, considering them as an encumbrance, the rare jewels that are strewn therein, are more to blame than those who call our attention to these same jewels without warning us that they constitute the exception and not the rule. After all, the saying that the first impression is nearly always the right one, holds good also in this case. Rudolph Roth, Max Muller and Adalbert Kuhn judged the Rigveda with more justice and equanimity than Abel Bergaigne and Hermann Oldenberg, in spite of the basis of a broader analysis and of fitter and more numerous instruments of research which the two latter could boast of.

What matters most is to point out the dynamical principle, the golden vein among the rubbish, the vital element among the heap of corpses. If among one hundred hymns only one has got life of feeling and of thought, this one hymn must have a greater weight than the remaining ninety-nine full of sterile symbols and liturgic nonsense. The first verse of the hymn I, 185 runs as follows: *Who is the younger, who the elder, of those two sisters? How were they born? Who, O seers, knows it? Anything that exists they sustain, and as with a wheel do they go round.* This one single verse which sets forth the problem of the origin of things with so much simplicity, is it not enough to make up for the great deal of quackery contained in many a liturgic hymn? If among the crowd of credulous shepherds, dazzled by the ceremonies of a sacrifice to Agni or to Soma, and listening with rapture, but no understanding at all, to the silly but sonorous words of a pedantic priest, even ten of them were able to detect the gossip and the imposture of the

*Almost all the Ushas-hymns are among the most poetical of those contained in the RV. They are likely to have most contributed to the spread of the wrong ideas entertained about the general character of the *Samhitá*.

pedant and the charlatan, and to understand the words of life coming from a true poet, was this not enough to rescue India from the bondage of ignorance and superstition?

India may have been wrong in not throwing into the fire two-thirds of her literature, but we Europeans, who are called to accomplish that work of sifting which India omitted to do, are still more wrong in judging India by those two-thirds and in behaving like a man who should scorn a mango-fruit on account of its uneatable peel. The second Western Vedic school has heaped so much dross on the gold contained in the Rigveda. that one can hardly find out the precious metal. And is it not just the reverse that we are expected to do, namely, to free the gold from the dross?

It s no easy task; for my part, it is the task I have always aimed at, even before I read Rabindranath Tagore's inspiring article in the Visva-bharati Quarterly of April, 1923. He also, at page 7 of that article, with his usual clear-sightedness and divining genius, speaks of a static and of a dynamic principle in Indian religious development, and so gave me the best encouragement I could hope for to go on with my further researches.

To conclude, the Rigvedic religion is a polytheism sprung out of the heart of a people that lived in close contact with Nature and who deeply felt themselves to be dependent on her. In such a polytheism undoubtedly the ceremonial rites and the symbolic liturgy preponderate over the everlasting creations of genius,—without, however, rooting them out wholly. The true poets are few, those capable of understanding them are few, but these few are quite enough to sow seeds and worthily to represent the genius of the race.

A religion like that of the Rigveda, founded on an intimate sense of relation between man and Nature, cannot help being permeated by a strong philosophic spirit. The very contradictions, the lack of discipline, the confusion, the anarchy, that are so prominent in the Rigveda, bear witness to this philosophic spirit. The singers seem to be at a loss to make up their minds

as to which god they have to grant their preference. In one hymn Indra obtains the foremost place, only to be displaced in a subsequent hymn by Varuna or Agni, Brihaspati or Soma. The triumph of a god is temporary, occasional; and this strange religious attitude of mind, unknown in other religions, has led to the forging of quite a new expression. We call this intermittent worship as the supreme one, of now this now the other god, by the term Enotheism, or Kathenotheism.

How is the origin of the world to be accounted for? Manifold is the answer in the Rigveda: perhaps it was Indra or Vishnu, or Brihaspati, who modelled it as a carpenter or a smith does the wood or the iron in his hand (VI, 4-F, 3, 4; I, 154, I; X, F-2, 2); perhaps some father and mother, namely, Heaven and Earth, gave it birth (VII, 53, 2; I, 159, 2; 185, 2, 4, 6); perhaps fire, or water, was the womb of all moveable and immoveable things (I, 115, I; 161, 9; VI, 50, F); perhaps only Savitar knows whence the sea first flowed and we never shall find out whence Savitar himself derives all the good things he lavishes so bountifully on us (X, 149, 2; V, 48, 5). Who will ever know which of the two was the first-born, day or night (I, 1&5, I)? Does Indra really exist? Who has ever seen him (II, 12, 5; VII, 100, 3)? Besides worshipping the gods, would it not be advisable to honour and sing good men's meritorious deeds and exhort the rich man to compassion and charity, reminding him that he also, like the poor man, must die one day? Starvation is not the only way to death: the surfeited man himself dies (VII, 35, 4; X, II-F, I).

It is clear that we have before us here all possible philosophical tendencies; the Rigvedic singers are in turn polytheist, monotheist, agnostic, sceptic, stoic, philanthrophist; and no task would be more difficult than that of disciplining Rig ed c religion into a system. We have to deal with a chaotic mass of the most various religious elements, from the humblest and the most primitive to the loftiest and ripest. But in this *mare magnum* of contradictions, superstitions and whims, a wonderful spirit of freedom of thought asserts itself and warrants the advent of glorious enlightenment.

We may reproach the Rigvedic singers with every fault except that of entertaining dogmatic and theocratic notions. Their perpetual wavering between this and that god, their restlessness in belief and worship, means the working of a genuine philosophic spirit that had necessarily to end in some grand and vital creation.

And a grand and vital creation must be called the philosophic hymns of the Rigveda which are contained mainly in the tenth *mandala*, and which will form the subject of our next lecture.

# THE INTERNATIONALISM OF ANCIENT INDIA.

*By* Dr. Kalidas Nag.

[*From a paper contributed to a Symposium on "The rôle of Internationalism in the development of Civilisation" invited by the Peace Congress of Lugano (Switzerland)*].

India enjoys the precarious privilege of possessing no systematic history well defined by Time and Space. She has passed, like every other country, through all the phases of historical evolution—sociological and religious, intellectual and political; yet with a peculiar obstinacy India has refused hitherto to develop a hierarchy of orthodox historians and a consistent tradition of national history. No doubt she has acknowledged from very ancient times the value of chronicles (*Itihásá-Purána*) as an intellectual discipline; but such compositions have remained, down to the appearance of the Muhammadan historians, as subsidiary to her proverbially rich contributions to Religion and Ethics.

To Western scholars, trained in methods of precision as applied to the intensive study of national histories, this apparent apathy towards the preservation of what they call "national glories" seems not only to be a little disconcerting but even derogatory to the prestige of the Indians as an intellectual people. Diagnosis of this peculiar malady led to the development of diverse theories: Lack of political cohesion and comprehension of national solidarity, oriental fatalism and obsession of hereafterism,—all these seemed to have combined to weaken the Hindu faculty of precision and thereby to sap the foundation of historical science in India. The present degradation of India was considered to be the cumulative effect of these national perversities, and well-wishers of India, both outside and inside, have sought to cure it by reconstructing her history on a national basis.

Without discounting the value of possessing a systematic

national history or disputing India's poverty in that department of literature, one may still plead that the judgment passed on the Indian people from such standpoint is nevertheless superficial and unjust. A people that could evolve, at least forty centuries ago, the earliest collection of human lyrics in the form of the Vedic Hymns, may be credited with a certain amount of creative imagination. A people that could present to the world, about 2,500 years ago, a scientific treatise on grammar like that of Pánini may aspire to a certain amount of analytical power and capacity for system-building. A people that could perpetuate through millenniums, the traditions of its religious, social and intellectual life—not through writing but by a phenomenal memory, may claim to possess some sort of instinct for precision and preservation. So it still remains a problem why such a people did not develop a tradition of national history in the special sense of our days. This is a paradox which has not been explained by the condescending theorists of the historical school.

It may not be an improbable hypothesis that the Hindus somehow felt history, with its interminable details of wars and treaties, of triumphs and dissolutions, to be but a poor portraiture of the real national life and a very unsatisfactory and imperfect reflection of its creative activities. They boldly challenged the validity of the *world of phenomena* and tried to discover the *world of permanence*, immutable beyond all phenomena. Revulsion from things transient and temporal produced almost an obsession of the Absolute and the Eternal. Thus India neglected History and developed Philosophy; or rather, she considered the quest of the spirit for the Eternal Verity as the real history of Humanity. Thus whilst her next-door neighbour China was quietly laying the foundation of early science and inventions; while Babylonia was developing the earliest astronomy and legal code; and while Egypt was composing her "Book of the Dead" and was trying to triumph over Death by her titanic architecture,—India was steadily scaling the supernal heights of Human Philosophy—the Himalaya of Thought—and was filling the world with the reverberation of profound questions about Existence and Non-

existence, Death and Immortality—fundamental problems of human life—through the Vedic Hymns:

> There was not the Non-existent nor the Existent then,
> There was not the air nor the heaven which is beyond,
> What did it contain? Where? In whose protection?
> Was there water, unfathomable, profound?
> There was not Death or Immortality then,
> There was not the beacon of Night nor of Day.
> *That* one breathed, windless, by its own power
> Other than *That* there was not anything, beyond.
>
> (Rig Veda X, 129, i, ii.)

Descending from the heights of primitive speculation, when India was confronted with the problems of complex life, in and through the expansion of her Society, she subordinated *Economics* to her science of Equity and Jurisprudence and *Politics* to her science of Ethics. Thus she developed her *Dharma-sástra* and *Rája-dharma* with *Dharma*, the Eternal, as the mainstay of her secular history. This obsession of the Eternal in her temporal life has its counterpart in the obsession of the Universal in her national history and that of the Formless in her æsthetic discipline, creating mystic forms and symbolic language. So Hindu apathy towards History is the effect of a malady that is deeper than the diagnosis of our modern historians. It is a triple complex which some future psycho-analyst may disentangle in order to satisfy our curiosity!

Meanwhile I beg leave to trace the influence of the Universal on the history of India, to indicate the landmarks of Internationalism in her national evolution and to point out, by suggestions and implications, if possible, the specific contributions of India to the development of International History. In an age, wherein international hatred threatens unfortunately to be the order of the day, such a study may not be without profit, not simply for the transvaluation of historical values but for ascertaining the warning gesture of the profound *Past* to our muddling *Present*.

The first and unfortunately the most tenacious fiction of Indian History is the glaringly unhistorical hypothesis that India grew up in "splendid isolation." For the fabrication of this fiction we have to be thankful as much to the narrow outlook of late Hindu orthodoxy as to the erroneous picture of primitive Indian society drawn by the early school of occidental philologists. While acknowledging fully the value of the works of these scholars in the decipherment of the ancient texts, we cannot forget that the outlook of these new types of *Pundits* were generally limited by those very texts which engrossed their attention. Thus frequently too much emphasis was laid on particular aspects of Indian life as suggested by some special terms or words, and too little regard paid to the general historical evolution.

Words are valuable as landmarks in the progress of society, but for that very reason they are but *static symbols* of the ever-changing and ever-expanding life. So the fancy picture of a caste-ridden India, cut off from the rest of the world by the external barriers of the ocean and the Himalayas as well as by the internal prohibitions of a morbid, all-excluding cult of purity,—India ever chanting Vedic hymns or celebrating occult sacrifices, weaving transcendental philosophies or absurd reactionary principles of life,—fades away as soon as we view it from the vantage ground of History. Truth is not only stranger but stronger than fiction. The chance-stroke of the spade of an archæologist makes short work of heaps of scholarly theories. So the discovery of the inscription of Boghaz Keui in 1907 by the German archæologist Hugo Winckler led to the explosion of the "Isolation" theory and expanded to an unexpected extent the horizon of Indian history. Here, for the first time, we read the startling fact that in far off Cappadocia, in the fourteenth century B.C., two belligerent tribes—the Hittites and the Mitannis,—invoked the Vedic Gods, Mitra, Varuna and Indra, while concluding a treaty; moreover, the special twin-gods, the *Nasatyas*, were invoked to bless the new marriage-alliance concluded between the two royal families.

Thus, by a curious coincidence, this first concrete document in the history of Indian internationalism, represents the Indian

gods as the peace-makers and harmonisers of conflicting interests; and as such, we consider the Boghaz Keui inscription not only as a landmark in Asiatic history but also as a symbol of India's rôle in the development of internationalism through *peace* and *spiritual unity*. This is, as we shall try to show, quite different from the *economic internationalism* of exploitation (*e.g.*, Phœnician) or the *imperialistic internationalism* of compulsion (*e.g.*, Assyrian and Roman).

We cannot forget that when the Indian gods appear for the first time in the symbolic role of Peace-makers in Cappadocia, Egypt is proudly proclaiming her world-conquests through the famous Victory Ode of Thutmosis III, cataloguing with sublime egotism the vanquished nations and countries. Further westwards, we hear about the same time (1500 B.C.) the Achæans thundering on the ramparts of the Ægian capital Knossos (Crete), the collapse of the Minoan hegemony in the Mediterranean and the peaceful penetration of the crafty Phœnicians connecting the East and the West with a subtle tie of economic exploitation. The Achæan ascendency, already weakened by the fateful Trojan War (1200 B.C.) as well as the Phœnician commercial empire began to give way before the onrush of the virile Dorians who, with iron weapons, inaugurated the Iron Age in Europe (1000 B.C.) vanquishing their predecessors of the Bronze Age; while in Asia, Assyria played the same role as that of the Dorians, pulverising the decadent nations with superior military organisation and efficiency.

What was happening in India in that epoch of transition from the pre-classical to the classical period of Western history with its interlude of the Epic Age, we have no definite political records to ascertain. But we have invaluable literary documents to attest the rapid development of Indian life and thought. From the Rigveda (the earliest literary monument, if not of humanity, at least of the Indo-European people) to the earliest *Bráhmanas* (1000 B. C.), Indian life had traversed quite a long path of sociological evolution. The Vedic Aryans were confronted with the same problem, presented to the Egyptians and Assyrians, Achæans and Dorians,—of an autochthonous people barring the way to the advance of a more virile expanding power.

And herein lies the originality of the Indian Aryans, that they solved the problem in the only lasting manner possible—by recognising the title of their rivals *to exist,* not merely as enemies but as collaborators in the building of a civilisation which we may call to-day as much Aryan as non-Aryan, Indo-Mesopotamian or Dravidian.

The Vedic literature being essentially sacerdotal, records but poorly this march of India along the path of historical synthesis. Yet, we get glimpses of the complex ty of the picture here and there; the background is already *polychrome;* the crowding of canvas is already Epic. From the very beginning we notice the *white* Aryans engaged in tussle with the *dark* aborigines. Surely, the social and political problems thus raised were not removed by the simple utterance of *Vedic Mantras*! There were occasional conflicts and out-bursts of cruelties. The path was often red with "blood and iron." The atmosphere was often dark with horror and the Vedic poets seemed to have given vent to their feeling of suspense and agony during those awful nights in their semi-symbolical hymn to Ushas—the goddess of Dawn to be born in the womb of primeval Darkness :

> Arise! the breath, the life again has reached us!
> Darkness has gone away and Light is coming.
> She leaves a path for the sun to travel,
> We have arrived where men *prolong existence*!
>
> Rigveda V. i. 113.

Yes, the aim of the Indian Aryans was to prolong existence not to extinguish it. And long before the formulation of the doctrine of *Ahimsá* (non-injury) by Mahávîr and the Buddha. India demonstrated her *profound respect for life* by realising that principle in her early history. The Aryo-Dravidian synthesis will ever remain the first and foremost glory in her career of international amalgam tion. Two nations, quite different in race, language and culture were fused to give birth to a virile stock of people and to lay the foundations of a great civilisation.

Needless to say that this was achieved through many conflicts and catastrophies which prepared the way for the Indian *Epic Age* with its formulation of the principles of *world power*

and world-empire (though the geography of that world was singularly different from our own!) Hence in the later Vedic literature as well as in the *Bráhmanas* we read frequently of *Sámrájyas* (vast empires) and *Sárva-bhaumas* (great emperors). From that doctrine it is an easy and normal transition to the concepts of *Digvijaya* (conquest of world-quarters) and that of *Rája-chakravartin* (super-sovereign of the diplomatic circle). That naturally brought in its train wars on an epic scale, and martial ballads composed by contemporary bards and minstrels. And just as Homers and pseudo-Homers appeared several centuries after the Trojan war to give epic form to the floating legends and ballads, so the actual great epics of India—the *Rámáyana* and the *Mahábhárata*—were composed by our Válmîkis and Vyásás many centuries after the traditional wars between Ráma and Rávana, or between the Pándavas and the Kauravas, towards the end of the Vedic age.

So whilst the Vedic age was a period of tribal warfare and unconscious fusion of tribes and races, the Epic age was a period of strife between more extensively organised kingdoms and empires, striving after suzerain power. In this epoch the old principle of *amalgamation* underwent its hardest test. In both the Epics, we read a great deal about wars, but in none of them do we miss the *lessons of war* as they were imprinted on the heart of the ancient Hindus; the ultimate victory is always on the side of the righteous and even then, victory in a game like war is too much like defeat!

That shows clearly that even in the process of testing the principle of concord and amalgamation, in the very act of experimenting with a new method of discord and dissolution, the Indian mind was wide awake and open to conviction. Hence the poet of the *Rámáyana* makes the victor Ráma stand humbly by the side of his dying enemy to have his parting advice. Hence also, in the *Máhábhárata,* we find the triumphant Yudhisthira sitting at the feet of the dying hero Bhîsma, to listen to the Canto of Peace as the only fitting conclusion to a war epic. Thus, confronting the actualities of war as a sociological experiment, its terrible consequences and tragic legacies, the Indian mind pronounced its verdict on war through the formulation of

new doctrines later on embodied in systematic treaties like the *Sántiparvan* and the *Bhagavadgítá.*

This sanity and this self-knowledge are indeed admirable. India tried the path of "blood and iron" and shrank back in horror and disgust. No doubt one school of thought continued to refine the philosophy of mutual suspicion and of the inevitability of war as a means of aggrandisement, and thus gave rise to the science of *Sádgunya* (sextuple methods of diplomacy) culminating in the atomistic politics of the *mandala* of the Arthasástra of Kautilya which dominated the political thought of India in her periods of disintegration. Another school attempted to explain away the war philosophically by transforming local war into an allegory of cosmic war, thus giving rise to the grand philosophical poem of the *Bhagavadgîtá.* While a third school candidly preached Peace, to be the only true sublimation of War and thus gave us the famous Sánti-parvan (the Canto of Peace).

The soul of India seemed to have been undergoing a travail for New Birth. The atmosphere was surcharged with a new agony, a terrific gloom which remind us very much of the age of the Vedic groping in the dark. Suffocating under that atmosphere of narrow egotism and shocking carnage, one section of the Indian mind sought and found liberation in the serene region of emancipated individualism (to which the Hindu mind always gravitates) and cried out through the deathless voices of the sages of the Upanishads, the message of this fresh Revelation :

> Listen to me, O ye children of immortality...I have come to know the Great Person, like the Sun, beyond the darkness.

This solemn call was sent to the whole universe (*Visva*) for it was the result of the realisation of Him who is the All-feeling one (*Sarvánubhuh*). And this new aspiration did not remain a mere ecstatic dream but soon became flesh in an actual *Purusa*, a historical personality—the Buddha, whom India created out of the depth of her universal charity. Truth, that was burning in the heart of India, became incarnate. Dispelling with the radiance of Divine Amity the dark smoke arising from the bloody altars of sacrifice, both sacerdotal and political, Buddha

proclaimed the sublime paradox that *to gain all one must give all,* to avoid suffering one must eradicate the all-devouring Ego, the root of all suffering, and that real illumination is in the quenching of the flames of passion (*Nirvána*).

The political history of Humanity is full of absurd gaps, stupid silences and illogical *lacunœ*! That is why we cannot explain satisfactorily the real significance of such grand historical revelations. But the history of human thought expresses itself by suggestions probably too subtle for our chronological apparatus. The unerring universalism of the Upanisads, the divine cosmopolitanism of Buddha, surely proceeded from some *super-historical,* if not historical need of Humanity. That is why, towards the end of our First millennium (circa 1400-500 B.C.), we find Buddha dedicating himself to humanity; Mahávîr, the founder of Jainism, preaching *Ahimsá* (non-injury) as the noblest principle of religion; and, in the dark days of the Chow dynasty of China, Lao-tse and Confucius evolving respectively their grand systems: the *Tao-kiao* (School of the Way) and *Ju-kiao* (School of the Knowers) emphasizing the same principles of life: non-interference, suppression of ego, and purification of heart. So also in the land of the Iranian cousins of the Indians, the reformation of faith had been started a little earlier by Zoroaster; and now we are startled to read for the first time in an imperial autobiography on stone—in the famous Behistun and Nakshi Rustam inscriptions of Darius the great (550-485 B. C.):

> Says Darius the King: for this reason Ahuramazda bore me aid, and the other gods which are, because I was not an enemy, I was not a deceiver, I was not a despot.

The last words of the Emperor of Asia were equally significant for the age:

> O man, what (are) the commands of Ahuramazda, may he (make them) revealed to thee; do not err, do not leave the right path, do not sin.

*Rastam ma avarada ma starava*—The right (path) relinquish not, do not sin—these are the last words of the greatest

figure in world-politics towards the end of this millennium. are surveying.

The Persian empire under Darius the Great, touching India on the one side and Greece on the other, marked the apogee of the history of antiquity and the connecting watershed of the streams of the Ancient and the Modern history. It awakened the lyre of the first tragedian of Hellas, Æschylus, fighting in the field Marathon (490 B.C.) and composing his drama *The Persians*. It evoked also the genius of Herodotus the father of European history. Pursuing the age-old method of pulverisation, Persia battered at the decaying fabrics of the ancient empires of Egypt and Mesopotamia and they tumbled down like houses of cards. So the Achemenian art under Darius represented in traditional style the throne of the world-emperor carried by long rows of vanquished sovereigns.

At the same time the traditional political legacy of the *dream of world-empire* hypnotised Greece, the first rival of Persia in Europe. From Greece the epidemic infection contaminated Rome. Greece checked the military advance of Persia but had neither the political sagacity nor the spiritual insight to arrest the disintegrating politics of antiquity, represented in its last phase by the Persian imperialism. The Peloponnesian war destroyed miserably the noble prospect of consolidation opened by the Confederacy of Delos. Hellas, and with her Europe, preferred the fateful path of empire-building. Athens, Sparta, Thebes, all attempted it in turn, till at last Alexander of Macedon succeeded in traversing the same path of conquest from Greece to India. What appears as a splendid turning of the tables on Persia is really an ephemeral imitation of the Persian emperors; and Persian influence on Alexander is acknowledged by all, for it was highly resented by his hellenic compatriots.

World-empire may be a new ideal with the occident, but it is a dangerously old institution of antiquity. In spite of the unmistakable warning of ancient history as to the inevitable self-disintegration of such gigantic edifices resting on the precarious foundation of *force*, Greece under Alexander and Rome under her republican proto-cæsars and imperial cæsars, attempted the dangerous experiment, met with the usual tragic disaster and,

even in the very failure, left the fateful legacy of empire-building to all of their "Barbarian" successors, who are struggling down to this day, with varying degrees of success and permanency, with the same impossible, antiquated experiment of antiquity, of building a world-empire—a machinery of gain for a *few* at the sacrifice of the *many,* based on the quick-sand of selfishness and propelled by the inhuman energy of brute force.

With phenomenal originality, nay with divine inspiration, India under Asoka the Great (273-242 B. C.) suddenly developed an ideal of *Empire of Peace and Progress* for all. Within 250 years of the appearance of the great Buddha, India produced another historic personality. *Dharmásoka* not only contradicted with an unparalleled historical sagacity, the entire politics of of antiquity up to his age but also, like a Spiritual Columbus, discovered a new world of constructive politics which, unfortunately, remains as yet only an aspiration and a dream for humanity. Behind him stretches the dead ruin of ancient empires; before him unfolds the tableau of lamentable duplication of the same selfish politics in our modern history; and in the centre lies the spiritual oasis of Asokan imperialism. The empire of Asoka, with its new philosophy of conquest by Righteousness (*Dharma-vijaya*) and its new foundation of universal Well-being (*Kalyána*), stands as the central climacteric of human history—at once a fateful warning and a divine inspiration for humanity.

Starting his career as an orthodox emperor engaged in the conquest of a territory (Kalinga) to the east of India, entailing the death of millions, Asoka had his first conversion as the result of that tragic contact with the actualities of politics. All in a moment he discovered his mistake; and not stopping there, like a truly great soul, admitted his mistake with a sincerity and a penitence rarely paralleled by any other character of history. His edict of Kalinga is the noblest monument of his magnanimity; he made his repentance a perpetual lesson to posterity by carving on the rocks of the ravaged Kalinga an account of his Imperial blunder. Through that awful suffering he arrived at that noblest of political revelations,—that "true

conquest consists in the conquest of men's hearts by the law of Dharma."

From that conversion and that revelation issued twenty years (261-242 B.C.) of humanitarian activities touching the frontiers of the Hellenic world on the one hand and of the Mongolian world on the other, building the *first great causeway of Love and Illumination* between the Orient and the Occident, the first code of progressive imperialism and the first basis of constructive internationalism. The great truth of Universalism which flashed as a *revelation* upon the Souls of the *Rishis* of the Upanishads, which appeared as an *incarnation* in the personality of the first World-man Buddha, translated itself into the Cosmopolitics of this first practical internationalist of history—Dharmásoka Piyadasi, the well-wisher of all, proclaiming with divine simplicity: *Sava munisá me pajá*—the whole of humanity is my children—an echo of the saying of his master, the Buddha.

Thus in the same epoch that Rome, the mother and model of European imperialism, was pulverising her last oriental enemy, Carthage, in the Punic Wars, Asoka had been celebrating the Spiritual Matrimony between countries and continents. This was undoubtedly a new departure in world-politics and the opening of a new page in the history of humanity. Not satisfied with preaching his new revelations *inside* India, Asoka sent his missionaries of humanism to Syria (then under Antiochos Theos) to Egypt (under Plotemy Philadelphos) to Cyrene (under Magas) to Macedonia (under Antigonos Gonatas) and to Epirus (under Alexander). Apart from these names inscribed on his Rock Edicts of 257-256 B.C., we have strong traditions about his missions to Ceylon visited by his own son Mahendra and daughter Sanghamitrá and even his mission to far-off Burma (Suvarnabhûmi). For the first time in history, humanity witnessed the *humanisation of politics;* and India, through the hands of Asoka, showered her blessings of Peace and Progress over this symbolical union of Asia, Africa, and Europe with ties of true internationalism.

By the side of this grand achievement of Asoka, the military adventures of Alexander the Great, in spite of their voluminous,

nay garrulous expatiations, appear quite mediocre so far as the sublimity of conception and originality in execution of a *world-idea* are concerned. Alexander, while acting as a splendid "Scourge of God" in punishing the decadent powers of antiquity, followed the traditional method of conquest in achieving the traditional ideal of autocratic empire. Thus, accidentally, he happened to be the founder of the Greek colonies which helped in the propagation of Hellenism, but consciously he might seldom be said to have worked out any definite order of human relationship helping human welfare. All the legends collected by later chroniclers about Alexander and the Indian Gymnosophists show how the Indian mind was not only not affected by the so-called martial glories of Alexander in India, but showed a somewhat disdainful pity at the sight of the cruel exploits of that Grand Barbarian.

As a matter of fact, as soon as his army, demoralised by over-exhaustion and by the dread of the great Gangetic empire of Magadha, turned its back on India, the so-called Hellenic conquest of Alexander was dissipated from the mind of the Indians as an evil dream. Soon after, Chandragupta Maurya (330-298 B. C.) the grandfather of Asoka, cleared the country of all foreigners and taught a good lesson to the second Greek invader, Seleukos Nikator, who was forced to cede the provinces of Paropanisadai, Aria, Arachosia and Gedrosia. A treaty to this effect was concluded about 300 B. C. strengthened by a matrimonial alliance,—a Hindu emperor marrying a Hellenic wife, in spite of the so-called caste rigidities. The Syrian court sent Megasthenes as an ambassador to the court of Chandragupta. Megasthenes left a valuable book—his *Indika,* and was replaced by Deimachos in the reign of the next emperor Bindusara (298 273 B. C.) who also received another envoy Dionysios sent by Plotemy Philadelphos of Egypt (285-247 B.C.), an ally of Bindusara and of his son Asoka.

Thus India through various political vicissitudes, through victory or defeat, was ever transforming the weapons of brute force into tools of human progress—art and literature, philosophy and religion. Her north-western frontier lands remained ever as a veritable laboratory of *Cultural Chemistry.* India has

demonstrated so far, that the political nomenclatures like the *Victor* or the *Vanquished* are misnomers. The real thing that counts and lasts for ever is human creation in and through human assimilation.

But now came the period when this principle of amicable international assimilation was put to the severset test. During the first half of this millennium (500 B.C. downwards), India had to encounter two nations that had a civilisation of their own —Persia and Greece. Fusion with them was comparatively an easy problem. But throughout the second half of this millennium (down to 500 A.D.) India was confronted with the problem of meeting the real Barbarians from Central Asia, surging down the Himalayas, and threatening to submerge civilisation in a deluge of savagery! Was India to make no distinction between the civilised and the non-civilised? Was she to follow still her policy of "the open door"? With supreme faith in her conviction about international amity India answered in the affirmative. Yes, she must allow every species of humanity to participate in her life and to test her principle. A law is either universal or nothing. Thus India remains faithful to her historical tradition, whatever may have been the fluctuations of her political destiny.

So when the barbarian Sakas began their trial of India's faith, India accepted, as she did accept and assimilate, the other branches of the barbarous races—the Kushans and the Huns. No doubt the instinct of conservation manifested itself in her stricter social legislation. The simpler social laws of the early law-books, the Dharma-sûtras, were amplified, sometimes showing inordinate rigidity (not always however ensuring or enforcing practice). Thus the great codes of Manu and Yájñavalkya of Vishnu and Nárada were all compiled in a systematic fashion by 500 A.D., and through them the Hindu mind betrayed its pre-occupation with the "untouchable *Mleccha* problem." But actual history always defies the codification of Social Legislators as well as the admonition of Social Censors. Sacerdotal blockade or imperial barricade were alike futile against subtle sociological fusion. The Four orders of Society—the *Chaturvarnas,* in spite of their being very ancient and quite orthodox as

contended by Oldenberg (Z.D.M.G., Vol. 51) remained generally and especially in this period, *in a state of fluidity* and Senart had good reasons to assert that the *Caste System* was largely a social fiction.

Hence we find, frequently, glaring exceptions and anomalies, *e.g.*, Mleccha Kings or laymen,—our Usabhadátas and Rudradámans—posing as the Pillars of Orthodoxy! This has been conclusively proved with reference to concrete epigraphic documents by Prof. D. R. Bhandarkar in his brilliant paper, "The Foreign Elements in Hindu Population" (Indian Antiquary. 1911). The sudden invasion and the continuous infiltration of these savage foreigners into India produced at first an ethnic confusion (*varnasamkara*) and cultural disturbance which threatened to be cataclysmic. It is the phenomenal adaptability or vitality of Hinduism that enabled her to sustain that shock. It produced no doubt at first a laxity in her lofty discipline by the inevitable enfranchisement of diverse religious and social norms. But, in another way, that apparent lowering of her standard led to a grand enrichment of her cultural life and an unparalleled *democratisation of her culture*. India had already developed the discipline of Faith (*Bhaktimárga*) through the Bhágavata sects of Vaishnavism (2nd century B.C.) for the foreign converts. The Bhagavad-gîtá offered, through its philosophical muse, salvation by faith in one God:

> "Leaving everything else aside
> Betake thyself to my unique protection."

And about the same time that the divine prophet of Judæa was putting to shame the whole decadent culture of the Greco-Roman world by his profound expiation for Humanity, India also was transcending her "little path" (*Hîna-yána*) of individual salvation and inaugurating her career along the "grand-path" (*Mahá-yána*) through her divine solicitude for the All-Being (*Sarva-sattva*). Her great poet-philosopher Asvaghosa, who composed a magnificent poem on Buddha, the first inculcator of universal amity (*maitrî*), also developed the philosophy of the All-Being as the ultimate goal of individual discipline, in his "Awakening of Faith" (*Sraddhotpáda-Sástra*) which may be

accepted as a landmark in the history of Indian internationalism. Moreover, it was composed by a philosopher who himself was carried away as a part of a tribute imposed on his native city by the Barbarian conqueror Kanishka.

Thus, from the beginning of the Christian era, India started playing her rôle of internationalism, not only through her lofty academic philosophy or through the vigorous propagation of a royal personality, but as a whole people following mysteriously a divine impulse, an ecstatic inspiration to sacrifice the *Ego* for the *All*. This grand movement of cultural conquest, this noble dynamic of spiritual imperialism—a legacy of Asoka—soon won for India an inalienable empire over the vast continent, right across Tibet and China to Corea and Japan on the one hand, and across Burma and Indo-China to Java and Indonesia on the other. The history of this phenomenal progress has yet to be written.

Scholars, like Richard Garbe and Vincent Smith, agree with regard to the theory that Buddhism influenced the early development of Christianity which in its turn coloured some of the later Hindu doctrines and creeds. "Although (Asoka's) missionary effort did not succeed in planting Buddhist Churches in foreign countries (excepting Syria) its effects may be traced," says Mr. V. Smith, "obscurely both on the history of Gnostic and Manichæan sects of Christianity." So the great Egyptologist, Flinders Patrie, remarks after having discovered portraits of Indian men and women at Memphis: "These are the first remains of Indians known on the Mediterranean. Hitherto there have been no material evidences for that connection which is stated to have existed both by embassies from Egypt and Syria to India and by the great Buddhist missions sent by Asoka as far west as Greece and Cyrene. We seem now to have touched the Indian Colony in Memphis and we may hope for more light on that connection, which seems to have been so momentous for western thought!"

This spiritual conquest took place not only along the land routes. In this marvellous century Hippalus discovered the Trade-winds, the "monsoons" (79 A.D.) and thereby facilitated sea voyage. *Periplus of the Erythræan Sea*, an invaluable

journal of some nameless navigator of this age, saved for us by chance, proves the magnitude of the international trade in that epoch extending from Africa *viâ* India and the Malay Peninsula to far off China. Bold Indian mariners were starting to found their culture-colonies in Champa and Cambodge in Indo-China, and in the Malay Archipelago as far as Java. For Ptolemy, in his Geography (2nd century A.D.) already calls the Island of Java by its Indian name Jabadiu. So Professor Pelliot in his researches into the history of Fu-nan (ancient Combodia) finds traces of Indian culture there, already in the 3rd century A.D. and also notices the frequent mention of big ships crossing the seas.

So, on the one hand, the material wealth of India was rapidly developing an active commerce between India and the Western Worlds, through the Roman Empire, and on the other hand, the invaluable spiritual treasures of India were inducing her far stabler relations with the Eastern World. Bakarai (port of Kottayam, Travancore) and Bharukaccha (Broach), Vidisa and Vaisali, Tamraparni and Tamralipti, were big centres in this grand international circulation, so well reflected in the anthologies of popular tales and legends: the Jatakas, the Avadanas and the Katha literature of India.

By the side of this wonderful development of internationalism through free economic relations and spiritual exchange, the rise and fall of political governments and national empires sink into the second rate in importance. The profoundest changes in the life history of nations are often effected silently by agencies distinctly non-political. So we watch the simultaneous collapse of the Kushana Empire in India and the Han empire in China (*circa* 225 A.D.); we observe the rise of the Sassanian empire in Persia (226 A.D.), the establishment of the Gupta empire in India (300 A.D.) and the downfall of the Western Roman Empire as the result of the Barbarian invasions (487 A.D.). But through all these rises and falls of empires continues the silent fertilising current of International Commerce—economic as well as spiritual—leading to a phenomenal quickening of human thought and sympathy.

Through all these periods of political trials and vicissitudes India went on quietly with her work of internationalism; and about the same time that the Huns were to open another chapter of savage onslaught on her bosom, India was sending her sons Kumarajiva and Gunavarman to China to preach Buddhism while Chinese pilgrims like Fa-hien, Chih-mong and Fa-mong were coming to India to drink at the fountain-head of spiritual wisdom. India realises herself in a new way by transcending her narrow national limits. That is probably why the greatest poet of this epoch (5th century A.D.) Kalidasa, the brightest of the "Nine gems" of geniuses adoring the court of Vikramaditya, gives deathless expression to this profound longing of India for the world beyond the Himalayas, through his immortal poem of the "Cloud Messenger" (*Megha-duta*) addressed to the Beloved of the Great Beyond—symbolical of this cosmic passion of India in this golden age of Indian internationalism.

The real *secret of India's success* in her eternal pursuit of *Visva-bharati* is, that in spite of occasional lapses to militarism on the part of individual sovereigns, the *Indian people as a whole, stuck substantially to the principle of Peace and Progress.* They respected the individuality of the races and nations which came into contact with them, offering their best and evoking the best in others. And so India managed to leave a record of collaboration in the realm of the Sublime and the Beautiful, quite remarkable in world history. The political conquerors and economic exploiters may have been there too; but they never played a dominant role in this grand drama of Creative Unity. That is why, when the names of the great kings and emperors were forgotten, the people of these cultural colonies cherished with gratitude the memory of the services rendered by the innumerable Indian monks and teachers, artists and philianthropists—selfless workers for human progress and international amity.

# THE ITALIAN EPICS

*By* Prof. Giuseppe Tucci.

If struggle and war constitute the necessary element from which *epopœia* can arise, the Middle Ages were certainly the fittest period for the growth of epic poems,—nay, no period in the world history was more agitated and harassed. But from the shock of the armies, the collision of the races, the never stopping unrest of peoples, the desolation of burnt towns,—always destroyed but always rising again from their ruins to assert, as it were, the unchecked thirst after life which is innate in man,—the songs of the poet rough and artless, and yet not destitute of artistic expressiveness, arose to articulate and to eternize the anxieties and the hopes, the griefs and the glories of their country and their heroes. The people listened to their voice as to its own voice and when the bard sang its past dangers, or its victories, it felt that it was living over again the life of its forefathers, it acquired consciousness of its unity and of its goal, and prepared itself for new attempts. So it happens during all ages of transition.

The same thing we meet with in ancient Greece, where the Homeric civilisation also represents a civilisation of transition. The glories and the magnificence of the Minoan kings disappear with the last flashing of their Aegian palaces burnt and pillaged by the Dorian invaders. Centuries of barbarity and wars followed, during which, through the Mycenean culture, the new immigrants came into contact with the remainders of older elements, and the first expansion of the Greek people along the shores of Minor Asia took place. When this fusion was accomplished, the storm had passed away, and the Greek civilisation was ready to start its ascent towards the highest conquests of art and thought, Homer came to sing the dirge of a dead world and to welcome the dawn of a new one.

History repeats itself. After the decay of the Roman Empire, Latin civilisation succumbed under the Barbarian in-

vasions; Europe became the battle-ground of races and peoples who came into collision with one another. The fusion of races and languages, the new religion, the decline of ancient conceptions, created new forms of life and new mental habits. It was a period of transition which, through blood-stained chaos, was trying to find its way and its new consciousness. But, as soon as the first empires and kingdoms began to arise, a new danger appeared in the Saracenic invasion. After the conquest of northern Africa and Spain, the Arabs were at the door of France, and from time to time made terrible incursions on the Italian shores.

The Latin world had become now a Christian world, and it was characterised by that deep faith which specially bad times know,—when people, having lost hope in this world find their only refuge in the consoling vision of a better future impossible to be realised on earth. Faith was life itself for the people: therefore they were fighting not only for their family and their country, but also for their spiritual life itself.

When Charles Martel faced at Poitiers (732 A.D.) the Arab army, the heart of all believers was with him, praying the Almighty for victory, anxious alike with fear and hopeful expectation. Charles Martel was victorious; and the simple, pious people felt that a new destiny had begun for them, they saw the grace of God in the victory. Rationalism had not yet routed imagination, religion permeated all aspects of life, everybody believed in the miracles and in the devil: God with his holy army of angels and cherubs had fought against the unbelievers. In this atmosphere, where reality and unreality blended, epics arose: it could not help being inspired by this decisive struggle and this triumph,—the inspiration rising to epic heights where they had suffered and feared the most: in France. The *Chanson des Gestes* was the epic of a new civilisation which, through its martyrdom of the Middle Ages, sprang from the ancient world as a bloody but heroic inheritance. Its poetry gave its welcome to the new Era, just as an unknown bard sang the war of the Pandavas and the Kaurava ushering a new Indian civilisation, and the Homeric poems did with regard to the Greek people.

But Italy, although permeated with the same religious spirit and agitated by the same preoccupations, did not produce, and could not produce, an epic poem. She had felt only as a mere reflex the struggles which France had fought, and she could not realise in all its value the grandeur of the event on which depended European destiny. She was divided into a number of small republics and states which could not rise from their particular interests to a large vision of common ideals. It is only in Dante that the conception of a real unity of our people, beyond its local differences, begins to appear. The communes and the political factions killed the consciousness that the Italians as a whole formed a nation, and that therefore they all had the same goal; and it is only this consciousness which can give to a people its real force of character,—this national feeling without which we cannot expect any epic.

In France the epic arose spontaneously among the people: in Italy we meet it as an importation from outside, therefore as an imitation,—more a literary feat than a popular expression. It was introduced about the 12th Century by an invasion of French bards who, attracted by the wealth of our country and the magnificence of our princes, came over to Italy singing at every opportunity, along the roads or in public festivities, the marvellous feats of Charles the Great and his Paladins.

Our people liked these songs, not only because it had a more or less vague consciousness of the historic importance of the struggles that were narrated, or because it was permeated with the same spiritual atmosphere, but specially because of the natural instinct, common in every man, of being roused into interest by everything beyond the ordinary course of human life. Poetry naturally gains the upperhand over the prose of every-day life because of the need that man has to break through all the ties of adverse circumstance and to rise on the wings of poetry into the realms of dream and illusion.

But these poems, however attractive they might have been to the soul of our people, could not become our own epics. The best proof here is, that the language also remained the original one, or at best was a curious mixture of old French and Italian vernaculars; as, for example, the so-called Franco-Veneto poems

which are written in a language half French and half Venetian like the *Prise de Pampelune* by Niccolo da Verona.

Of course we had anonymous imitators of these poems; but they were devoid of artistic value because they originated not from any spiritual urge, but as I said, by way of supplying the demand due to the great favour with which they met.

But, as it always happens, by being used only as a pastime and recreation, the poems lost every true epic character: the fantastic element took little by little the prominent place and the most impossible events constituted the real background, the making of "effect" was the main object. For the common people are naturally capricious; they wil have their own heroes, their facourite warriors,—there are types which specially appeal to their soul.

Charlemagne's figure became gradually discoloured: Orlando, Tancredi, Ruggieri are some of the legendary heroes to whose feats a great poetic and popular literature was dedicated. But France, from which in the beginning Italian literature derived its inspiration and its models, had also another kind of poetry. Wars and fights were no more the background of these epics, nor is it possible to find in them any echo of the struggle against the unbelievers. The atmosphere is less tragic and dark, more delicate and human is the spirit which permeates these poems. The soft smile of the beloved replaces the clash of weapons: to the defence of country and fatherland, the romantic pilgrims of love seem to prefer the service of their Madonna. The new hero looks on the woman of his heart as the unique woman, to whose glory he dedicates his sword, to whose adoration he consecrates his life. The ideal of chivalry has its best and highest expression in these poems of the *Artu* cycle, in which the bloody and agitated Middle Ages appear to us in a light of unusual purity and unsuspected loftiness, as if they make up for their past errors and savagery.

These new poems, when they came to Italy, spread not so much through the populace which, with insatiable curiosity, flocked to listen to the new minstrels, as in the courts of princes and among the aristocracy. But the political conditions, and the very history of Italy did not allow even this kind of poem

to assume a national, an Italian character. In Italy German or French feudalism throve only for a short time; very soon republics and communes dismantled the castles of the Lombard princes and the Anjoins checked the feudalism of the Norman barons. The Lombard *Carroccio,* which withstood the descent of Frederick Barbarossa, marks the decline of feudalism in Italy. As the forms of life had changed, so were the circumstances of our people different; the spiritual atmosphere was quite another; nor even could the Artu cycle—representing a dead civilisation which had disappeared without leaving lasting traces,—grow up and prosper.

But, if the two cycles did not survive among our people as epics, they did not disappear; they remained as fiction literature in the forms of novels and romances. The one cycle gave birth to the love romance: Giulietta and Romeo, Tristan and Isotta the Tavola rotonda are the typical examples of this literature, passionate and heroic, and yet imbued with a soft melancholy. The other changed into what we may call the adventurous romance, which maintained only the background of its ancient epic character, but in which the fanciful, the strange and the vulgar element gradually got the upperhand.

The times had changed deeply,—the classic culture, springing up, as it were, more living and provoking from a secular silence and from forgotten manuscripts brought again to light, revived the pagan ideal of beauty. The *beautiful* substitutes itself for the *sacred* and art invests all forms of life, an art which proceeds more from study and imitation than from a spontaneous and free *phantasie,* and cannot help therefore being recondite, bedizened, classic, and therefore destitute of that sublime simplicity which constitutes the charm of all spontaneous literature.

Our literature was growing up under the influence of classic models, in a country which was believed to be great only because its people were the scions of Rome. Intellectual life was to be found only at the courts of princes, or in the circles of the aristocracy,—the meeting places whereto humanists and men of letters, artists and poets flocked, selling the service of their pen and of their genius to the highest bidder. They were

in the field of letters what the *Condottieri* were in that of arms.

But under this blossoming appearance of the higher classes there was the mass of ignorant and miserable folk, without any will and without any energy, but changing from one master to another, always ready to bear the heavy burden of servitude with hopeless resignation. They were still permeated with the ancient ideas and principles, the religious feeling was living in them with all its exaggerations and awkwardness. They went to the holy ceremonies with a pious heart, they listened in awful despair to the apocalyptic sermons of Gerolamo Savonorola, and they took part in the wonderful feats of Rinaldo or Orlando that minstrels or bards were singing or reciting during their holidays.

It was a period full of contradictions and of spiritual restlessness, evidenced alike by the machinations of its politicians and the levities of its poets, but it was also a period rich with creative powers. But neither did the people suffering in slavish captivity, nor the high and cultivated classes pursuing only their particular interests or their artistic dreams,—drugged as they were by admiration for their past, blinded by the splendour of their arts, the magnificence of their courts,—succeed in realising themselves as Scions of Rome, and the triumph of letters cost them their fatherland.

Foreign peoples had conquered Italy, political interest was absent; if we had wars and plots which made havoc of the country, it was only because princes and tyrants pursued the particular interests of their own families. There was no feeling of nationality, no consciousness of our fundamental unity; sheer individualism was reigning in political as well as in social life. There was no regular army, but only mercenary troops which offered their services to the best payer, ready to turn traitor whenever they should find a more generous master. It was therefore only too natural if the popular army collected by the famous secretary of the Florentine Republic, Nicolas Machiavelli, proved quite inadequate for the heroic deeds to which it was called. The faith itself which had permeated the middle ages was disappearing; life had no more its goal, and its justification

in the Great Beyond that Dante had glorified; it was no more that arena from which the human soul can return, in all its purity, to the feet of the Creator; or, overcome by the devil, prepare for eternal perdition. The Popes themselves were the best patrons of humanism, and the Roman court, with its splendour, its pomps, its corruptions, could not claim to be the best interpreter and repository of evangelic tradition.

This was not atheism, but something worse,—it was religious indifference. The Italian people respected religion by inertia; they followed the formal part of religion; but, more especially as to the higher classes, they were inwardly pagan. It was the realm of beauty and of art, of pure imagination, which appealed to them. While Germany had her religious struggles, and France knew the horror of the night of St. Bartholemew, Italy was enduring the counter-reform with the greatest indifference, not because she was deeply catholic but because, to her, religion was more a formal question than a substantial one. "Religion," said Giordano Bruno in a quite outspoken manner, which was perhaps one of the principal reasons of his martyrdom, "is only a good means of restraining and subjugating the people".

## TO THE POETS OF TO-DAY

O brother-poets of to-day
In unbelief we sing,
No deep-flame vision's certain ray
Our speech informs ; no gift we bring
From Halls of Silence, minting human strife
In golden words, that spell in flame the mystery of life.
So languishes our tree of poesy,
Raised by no sap of kindling certainty
To high authority.

Only we scorn
The unexamined faith ; the sickly morn
Of easeful half-truths ; facile, blind belief ;
Choosing deliberate uncertainty and grief.
We root up, prune, re-graft, we scatter seeds about,
The reapers of the future, they shall reap our doubt.

**Jehangir J. Vakil.**

# THE LIVING BHAGAVADGITA.

*A Review**

*By* Dr. C. Kunhan Raja.

The wide gulf that separates the present India from her past,—a gulf that was the result of an earthquake in the region of Indian History about a century ago, by which the traditions of a long civilization and culture were cut off entirely, owing largerly to the aversion of the people themselves from their past culture, but helped by the indifference of the foreign administration,—has been getting wider and wider till it has deprived us of a safe footing behind our lines; it is making it impossible for us to press forward in our battle of life while cutting us off from all supplies and ammunitions from Headquarters.

Since we are not sure of a safe ground behind, to which we can retire in case we are hard pressed, we are not bold enough, though many are not conscious of the weakness, to advance with resolve and confidence. We are compelled to be on the defensive on a narrow ridge, perhaps to be thrown at any moment into the deep abyss behind, unless we are able to restore communications and get into touch with our friends on the other side.

It is not the economic drain, not the gradual destruction of our martial spirit, not the introduction of foreign ideas and ideals, not the absence of industry, not the illiteracy of the masses, not the presence of foreign rulers,—it is none of these that is the real danger to India. They are all only symptoms of a far more dangerous disease behind, in the lack of a really cultural and ennobling education,—I do not say among the masses, but even among the chosen few who are to lead the nation in her struggle for her legitimate place in the world.

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***Introduction to the Bhagavadgita** by *Prof. D. S. Sarma*—Ganesh & Co., Madras.

There is no real education that widens our outlook upon life, that enables us to look across the vast expanse of time left behind us in our history, to see across this vast expanse the hands of help streched out by our great ancestors, to visualise the familiar faces, of brethren, friends and relatives, far removed from us in time. Such an education alone,—through the revealment of such an outlook upon life,—enables us to feel friendship, kinship, and brotherhood across vast regions of space, across oceans and mountain barriers, and it is the sole necessary preliminary for a sense of universal brotherhood.

There are not a few in India, who, though they have received the highest available instruction, think that India burst forth like a May-fly only on the previous night, as a part of the British Empire. For lack of the vision given by their traditional culture, they are not able to see far in advance of themselves; they live and move in a narrow circle, and have a distrust of everything coming from outside it. When they are forced to look beyond, they feel giddy and faint-hearted. Thus the recent history of India is a sad tale of mediocrities, of make-shifts and of indecisions in all walks of life,—politics, commerce, industry, scholarship,—everywhere.

Professor Sarma has made a right beginning in his own modest, silent, but still decided way. He has shown that even Government educational institutions afford ample scope for work to a sincere and competent servant of the country. He does not believe in lime-light, in dazzling prospectuses and programmes and in exaggerated reports. He knows that such labour is to be tested only by the new outlook upon life which the young men under his care will develop in themselves as a result of their contact with his ideals and his personality.

The real pariots India, the saviours of our unhappy land, are to be produced, not in any and every institution with the label of nationalism, but in those intitutions only where grand ideals prevail, where both teachers and students are compelled, by the force of the attractiveness of such ideals, to live up to them, no matter whether the institution is maintained by the

Government or is independent of State aid. Professor Sarma has made an earnest start. Grand ideals emanate from individuals and not from a democratic commune,—that was ever the case,—take Buddha, Christ or Mahommed. Democracy has rather ruined ideals.

"The Introduction to the Bhagavadgita" consists of a series of lectures that the author delivered to the students of the Presidency College Hostel, of which he is the warder. It is not really a dry series of lectures to be drowned in the current of life, or forgotten the day after. They are talks to the students, to which the winning personality of the lecturer has given new value. I know personally what influence the author's ideals have had on the mind of the young men under his guidance and inspiration.

"The aim of the book is, frankly, to make the students lead a life of high purpose" (*preface*). Professor Sarma has thus selected the right text to be placed before the youth of India. "The Bhagvadgita has been translated into many important languages, not at the instance of any propagandist mission, but because the need was really felt among disinterested scholars". So, unlike sectarian scripture, it has become a guide and a solace to the whole human race.

The sudent is advised "to go through the bare text several times without any commentary, marking all the passages that appeal to him most and bringing his inner life to bear on them." A dfficult word here, a technical term there, an obscure passage, some apparent incongruities, or unacceptable theories,—these should not detain the reader. It is not a perfect text at the first glance. That it cannot be, for if it were, it could not be a philosophy of life. Life is full of contradictions, of riddles, and obscurities. But that does not dissuade us from studying human life with all its problems.

It is not always the most obvious things that are the most important. When we see things partially, when only the very obvious strikes our eyes, we do not see the order, the unity in them. But when we concentrate ourselves on it, meditate on

it, become one with it, then the finer threads that bind the various parts together, at first invisible, come into our view; the gaps and holes are gradually filled up by tiny particles and a finished, perfect whole, a single unit, not a jumble of detached and mutually inconsistent parts, emerge.

One cannot learn and enjoy the beauty of a work of art by analytical methods. The same is true of the Bhagvadgita. Read the text over and over again; the inconsistent parts soon come together and they are unified into a single, harmonious whole. This is the experience of those who have already followed the advice of Mr. Sarma, among whom I claim to be one. The advice is true of all great works, and I am prepared to extend the advice beyond the field of the Gita, though the author does not seem to favour that course.

Referring to his text the Author says: "We clearly see three different figures of Krishna at three different levels. We have Krishna asking Arjuna to pray to Durga, we have Krishna standing as *Bhagaván* himself, and we have Krishna enticing Karna in vain to desert the Kaurava side. It is difficult to believe, in spite of the resemblances of style and language, that three such different portraits are by the same hand.". To me it is clear that those who do not see the identity of these three portraits miss the links that hold them together. To those devoted to the meditation upon Krishna for years, the same Lord is seen in all these three pictures; for them there is no inconsistency.

Professor Sarma confesses that "a philosopher in the 19th century has to base his sytem on the theory of evolution." The theory of the evolution of the Mahábhárata in this book may help to make it acceptable to those who claim descent from apes and monkeys. Apart from that, the book is sure to be a source of real inspiration to those who love to be associated with the Divine, who love to think of the godly in man, not the remnants of lower species in him.

The author knows, in spite of his Darwinian tendencies, that "the world has sprung from God. We know that its attractions rouse us to action. And we know also that, until

we have resisted it with the strength of our souls, we have not 'trodden the path' ". The whole philosophy of the Gita is compressed into the little sentence: "We know we are higher than the things of the world." This indeed is its key-note. The "we" represents a unitary experience. It is not the subject alone. It is the sum total of the whole experience. The mistake comes in when we limit the "we" to the subject and relegate the objects of experience to the outside of "we". This narrow view leads one to the belief that the experiencer is smaller than his experience, which stretches far out on all sides of him.

The Gita advises us to rise above this littleness of mind, to look upon the objects of experience as parts of us and smaller than us, to be free from the notion of pleasure and pain overcoming us. This is its refrain: *to rise above the conflicts* of *pleasure and pain.* These opposites are below us, subject to our control, if only if ye exert the right sort of control; and they should not be allowed to dominate us.

In this attitude of mind, one should read the Gita over and over again. Everything that comes across your eyes may not agree with your notions of science and philosphy. Every age has its own theories. "Every religious teacher has to make use of the scientific knowledge of his times. A preacher belonging to the Middle Ages in Europe cannot but express his belief in Ptolemaic astronomy and the theory of humours. A philosopher in the nineteenth century has to base his system on the theory of evolution. The philosopher of to-day makes use of the theory of relativity and the electrical theory of matter. It is bigotry to insist on faith in the scientific theories current in his time, he will do well to suspend his judgment, and not run to hasty and irrelevant conclusions". No better guidance could be given to a man who takes up the Gita for special study, so far as his attitude is concerned.

There are many so-called educated men in India at present who are under the misguided impression that our ancient literature can give us no help in our problems of modern life.

Those who know absolutely nothing of Indian literature are the most noisy in such condemnations. They believe that our ancients concerned themselves more about things beyond life, beyond the earth and its realities; and that, to understand life and be sensible to its true problems, we must go to modern European literature, by which they understand mainly English poetry. Those among our "scholars" who write the "History of Indian Philosophy" only make matters worse by emphasising the wrong notion that the study of ancient "Indian Philosophy" and its literature serves only as a good preparation for death.

Professor Sarma gives us the right clue when he says: "The age, that gave birth to this scripture, as we have it now, was in many respects similar to ours. The special problem of India then was, as it is still to-day, how to bring about a unity in a vast mass of heterogenous population, containing various races with different levels of culture." "The ideal of a full life which takes into account all the facts of human nature doing no violence either to the flesh or to the spirit and which was as much a corrective to the monastic Budhism of those times as it is to the materialistic civilization of to-day, was preached in a thousand different ways in the literature of the Hindu Renaissance—the epics, the code of Manu, the later Puranas".

I cannot resist the temptation here to quote Kalidasa who puts this ideal of full life in the following beautiful stanza:

*Saisavé 'bhyastavidyánám*
*Yaüvane visayaisinám*
*Várdhakye munivrttînám*
*Yogenánte tanutyajám.*

Acquiring thorough education in boyhood,
Enjoying the world in youth,
Retiring from the world as a *sanyásin* in old age
And leaving the body in the end through *yôga.*

Professor Sarma, in concluding the second from which the above passages were quoted, makes an earnest appeal to the

students to take up the study of our ancient culture. I content myself with quoting two sentences. "If they want to equip themselves properly for that task, they should read the literature of the epic age with imagination and insight, and derive their inspiration from the great nation builders of that time". "Why, we may even say,—though in our present sinful state the statement may provoke the laughter of the gods,—that they will also be able to give a message to the world." Such appeal must touch the heart of even the most indifferent youths of India and rouse them to a serious study of ancient Indian culture.

The book is divided into 12 sections, the last covering only a page. In this small book of 108 pages, the author has examined the Gita in all its aspects,—its position in the Mahabharata, its relation to the Upanishads and the six systems of philosophy, to Buddhism and the Bhágavata religion. He has dealt with the main teaching of the Gita and discussed the question whether the central teaching is *jñána* and *sanyása* as explained by Sankara, or *bhakti* as explained by Rámánuja, or whether it is karma as explained by Tilak. His own conclusion,—the right one,—is that "the appeal is not merely to the will of man or his heart or his intellect. It is to the whole man." "It is the greatness of the Gita that it affords such a guidance, treating human life as one indivisible whole."

The author refers to "the common error of supposing that the Gita is a cold, stoic gospel, preaching duty for duty's sake. It leads also to the misapprehension that it is a gospel of ascetisism which may be good enough for men of advanced age, but quite unfit for young students on the threshold of life. Well, asceticism is no bad ideal especially in these day of indiscipline and indulgence. That a Hindu student should be scared away by an ascetic ideal is the true measure of his fall." The Gita is not a scripture for any sect in particular. "With a wide toleration which is both the strength and the weakness of Hinduism, the author of the Gita tells us that the worship of all the deities is only a worship of *Isvara*".

Professor Sarma discusses in great detail the question

whether the Gita sanctions war, and concludes that, "the Gita neither advocates war, nor condemns it. It is more concerned with the general question how a man should view his duty as a part of the will of God and discharge it selflessly."

The book is very aptly prefaced with a quotation from Mahatma Gandhi which I reproduce:

> I must confess to you that when doubts haunt me, when disappointments stare me in the face, and when I see not one ray of light on the horizon I turn to the Bhagavadgita, and find a verse to comfort me; and I immediately begin to smile in the midst of overwhelming sorrow. My life has been full of external tragedies and if they have not left any visible and indelible effect on me, I owe it to the teaching of the Bhagavadgita.

This high testimony as to the living value of the Gita, coming from a saint like Mahatma Gandhi, must appeal to every man, whatever his political views, whatever his differences from Mahátmáji so far as his recent activities are concerned.

I have given copious quotations from the book to give the readers a fair idea of the scope of the book and its general tendency. If I am asked to give my opinion on it in a sentence, I cannot do better than quote this line from Bharavi:

*Upapattir udáhrtá balád*
*Anumánena na chágamah kshatah*
*Iyam idrg anigamayah*
*Prasabham vaktum upakrameta kah.*

Strong arguments are put forward, but rationalism has not tampered with authority.
Who but a man of his mental calibre would be bold enough to start such a discourse?

## NOTES AND COMMENTS

*By* Rabindranath Tagore.

When I was a child, God also became a child with me to be my playmate. Otherwise my imperfections would have weighed me down, and every moment it would have been a misery to be and yet not fully to be. The things that kept me occupied were trifling and the things I played with were made of dust and sticks. But nevertheless my occupations were made precious to me and the importance that was given to my toys made them of equal value with the playthings of the adult. The majesty of childhood won for me the world's homage, because there was revealed the infinite in its aspect of the small.

And the reason is the same, which gives the youth the right to claim his full due and not to be despised. The divinity which is ever young, has crowned him with his own wreath, whispering in his ears that he is the rightful inheritor of all the world's wealth.

The infinite is with us in the beauty of our childhood, in the strength of our youth, in the wisdom of our age; in play, in earning, and in spending.

All our desires are but focussing our will to a limited range of experience. These become jealously tenacious and combative when we fail to imagine that our experience will widen. In our childhood we wished for an unbounded continuity in our enjoyment of a particular food or game and we refused to believe in the worth of a mature age which had different interests altogether. Those who build their vision of a life after death upon the foundation of desires belonging to the present life merely show their want of faith in Eternal life.

We must know that to be provided with an exact apportion-

ment of what we deserve and need, is like travelling in a world whose flatness is ideally perfect, and therefore where the fluid forces of nature are held in suspense. We require ups and downs, however unpleasant they may be, in our life's geography, in order to make our thoughts and energies fluently active. Our life's journey is a journey in an unknown country, where hills and hollows come in our way unawares, keeping our minds ever active in dealing with them. They do not come according to our deserts, but our deserts are judged according to our treatment of them.

When we come to believe that we are in possession of our God because we belong to some particular sect, it gives us a complete sense of comfort to feel that God is no longer needed, except for quarrelling with others whose idea of God differs from ours in theoretical details.

Having been able to make provision for our God in some shadow-land of creed, we feel free to reserve all the space for ourselves in the world of reality,—ridding it of the wonder of the infinite, making it as trivial as our own household furniture. Such unlimited vulgarity only becomes possible when we have no doubt in our minds that we believe in God while our life ignores Him.

The pious man of sect is proud because he is confident of his right of possession in God. The man of devotion is meek because he is conscious of God's right of love over his life and soul. The object of our possession becomes smaller than ourselves, and without acknowledging it in so many words the bigoted sectarian has an implicit belief that God can be kept secured for certain individuals in a cage which is of their own make. In a similar manner the primitive races of men believe that their ceremonials have a magic influence upon their deities. Sectarianism is a perverse form of worldliness in the disguise

of religion; it breeds narrowness of heart in greater measure than the cult of the world based upon material interest can ever do. For, the undisguished pursuit of self has safety in its openness, like filth exposed to the sun and air. But the self-magnification, with its consequent lessening of God, that goes on unchecked under the cover of sectarianism loses its chance of salvation because it defiles the very source of purity.

Religion, like poetry, is not a mere idea, it is expression. The self-expression of God is in the endless variedness of creation; and our attitude towards the Infinite Being must also in its expression have a variedness of individuality ceaseless and unending. Those sects, which jealously build their boundaries, with too rigid creeds excluding all spontaneous movements of the living spirit, may keep hoarded their theology, but they kill religion.

When religion is in the complete possession of the sect and is made smooth to the level of the monotonous average, it becomes correct and comfortable, but loses the living spirit of art. For art is the expression of the universal through the individual, and religion in its outer aspect is the art of the human soul. It almost becomes a matter of pride and a sign of superior culture to be able to outrage all codes of decency imposed by an authorised religion bearing the stamp of approval of an organisation which can persecute but has not the power to persuade.

As an analogous phenomenon, we have known literary men deliberately cultivating a dread of whatever has the reputation of goodness, and also men of art afraid of being suspected as lovers of the beautiful. They rebel against the fact that what is proper and what is true in beauty and in goodness have become mixed up in man's mind. The appraisement of what is proper does not require any degree of culture or natural sensitiveness

of mind, and therefore it fetches a ready price in the market, outbids truth, becomes petty in its tyranny and leaves smudges of vulgarity upon things that are precious. To rescue truth from the dungeon of propriety has ever been the mission of poets and artists, but in times of revolution they are apt to go further,—by the rejection of truth itself.

In our epic, Rámáyana, we find that when Rámachandra won back his wife from the clutches of the giant who had abducted her, his people clamoured for her rejection, suspecting defilement. Similarly in art, fastidious men of culture are clamouring for the banishment of the beautiful because she has been allowed to remain so long in the possession of propriety.

Those who have their enterprises in the world of nature, master her forces, becoming rich in wealth and power. The greatest gain which comes across their path in their adventures is moral truth. For power is combination, and all combinations, in order to be perfect, need the help of the moral law, in which individuals acknowledge the universal principle of the good. Moral truth is most needed when men move, and move together.

But laws, whether in nature where it is physical, or in society where it is moral, are external. They are formal, lacking that deeper mystery of perfectness, which is creation; which is in the beauty of harmony in nature; which is in the beauty of love in man. Law is the channel of finitude through which things evolve without ceasing, but its meaning lies in its revolution round an inner centre which is infinite. We follow law to live; we reach the centre to find immortality.

With the truth of our expression we grow in truth. The truth of art is in the disinterested joy of creation, which is fatally injured when betrayed into a purpose alien to itself. All the great civilisations that have become extinct must have come to

their end through some constant wrong expression of humanity; through slavery imposed upon fellow-beings; through parasitism on a gigantic scale bred by man's clinging reliance on material resources; through a scoffing spirit of sceptisism robbing us of our means of sustenance in the path of truth.

Consciousness is the light by the help of which we travel along our path of life. But we cannot afford to squander this light at every step. Economy we need, and habit is that economy. It enables us to live and think without fully keeping our mind illumined. On festival nights we do not count the cost of our excess of light, because it is not for removing some deficiency, but for expressing the sense of our inner exuberance. And for the same reason habit becomes a sign of poverty in our spiritual life; for it is not a life of necessity, but of expression. In our love, our consciousness has to remain at its brightest, in order to be true. For love is no mere carrying out of some purpose, it is the full illumination of consciousness itself.

It we allow our act of worship to deaden into a habit, then it frustrates itself, stiffening into mere piety which is a calculated economy of love. For worship has its worth, not in any form of action, but in a perfect outflow of consciousness, for which habit has the tendency of becoming an impediment. We grow worldly in our devotion when we imagine that it confers upon us some special advantage, thus causing pious habits to be formed and valued. For when it is a question of profit, buying in the cheapest market is the best wisdom; but when complete giving out is the sole object, then economy is nothing but cheating one's own self.

Our nature being complex it is unsafe to generalise about

things that are human; and it is an incomplete statement of truth to say that habits have the sole effect of deadening our mind. There are helpful habits that are like a channel which helps the current to flow,—open where the water runs onwards, guarding it only where it has the danger of deviation. The bee's life in its channel of habit has no opening,—it revolves within a narrow circle of perfection. Man's life has its institutions which are its organised habits. When these act as enclosures, then the result may be perfect, like a bee-hive of wonderful precision of form, but unsuitable for the mind which has unlimited possibilities of growth.

Nature is a mistress who tempts is with liberal wages—so much so, that we work extra hours for the extra remuneration. Yet in in the midst of this bribery and its temptations, man still cries for deliverance. For he knows that he is not a born slave and he refuses to be deluded into believing that to follow one's own desires unhindered is freedom. His real trust lies in his growth and not in his accumulations. The consciousness of a great inner truth lifts man from his surroundings of petty moments into the region of the eternal. It is the sense of something positive in himself for which he renounces his wealth, reputation, and life itself, and throws aside the scholar's book of logic, becoming simple as a child in his wisdom.

Our living body in its relations to the physical world has its various wishes. These are to eat, to sleep, to keep warm or cool, as necessity demands—and many others. But it has a permanent wish, which is deeper and therefore hidden. It is the wish for health. This is at work every moment, fighting diseases and making constant adjustments with changing circumstances. The greater proportion of its activities are carried on behind our consciousness. He who has wisdom in regard to his physical welfare knows this and tries to establish harmony

between the bodily desires that are conscious and this one desire which is latent. And he willingly sacrifices the claims of his appetites to the higher claim of his health.

We have our social body in which we come into relation with other men. Its obvious wishes are those that are connected with our selfish impulses. We want to get more than others do, and pay less than is our due. But there is another wish, deeply inherent in our social life, which is concerned with the welfare of the community. He who has social wisdom knows this and tries to bring all his clamorous wishes about personal pleasure, comfort and freedom under the dominion of this hidden wish for the good of others.

Likewise the obvious wish of our soul is to realise the distinction of its individuality, but it has its inherent wish to surrender itself in love to the Great Soul.

The wish for health takes into account the future of the body. The wish for the social good also has its outlook upon the time to come. They both face the infinite. The wish of our soul to be one with the Great Soul transcends all limitations of time and space. Thus in our body, society, and soul we find on the surface the activity of numerous wishes and in their depth that of one will which gives these wishes unity, leading them to peace, goodness, and love. In other words, on the one hand we have the wishes of the moment, and on the other the wish for the eternal. It is the function of our soul to unite these two and build its heaven upon the foundation of the earth.

Our energies are employed in supplying ourselves with things and pleasures. They have no eternity in their background. Therefore we try to give things an appearance of permanence by making them big. Man in his anxiety to prolong his pleasure and power tries to make additions, and we are afraid to stop, because we fear that they must some day come to an end.

But truth is not afraid to be small, to come to an end, just as a poem, when it is finished, is not really dead,—not

because a poem is composed of endless lines but because it carries an ideal of perfection. The pauses of truth have the cadence of the infinite, its disappearances are the processional arches of immortality.

No flame burns for ever. Light goes out for want of oil, is puffed out by the wind, often the lamp itself is shattered. In our fit of irritation we may say that the power of darkness is final and true, or that we create light ourselves by lighting the lamp. But the truth is that every extinction of light is to prove that the source of light is without end, and man's true power lies only in his ability to prove this over and over again.

When Buddha preached *maitri*—the relationship of harmony—not only with human beings but will all creation, did he not have this truth in his mind that our treatment of the world is wrong when we solely treat it as a fact which can be known and used? Did he not feel that its meaning can be attained only through love because it is an expression of love which waits for its answer from our soul emancipated from the bondage of self? This emancipation cannot be negative in character, for love can never lead to negation. The perfect freedom is in a perfect harmony of relationship and not in a mere severance of bondage. Freedom has no content, and therefore no meaning, where it has nothing but itself. The soul's emancipation is in the fulfilment of its relation to the central truth of everything that there is, which is impossible to define because it is in the end of all definitions.

The beauty which is in this evening sky comprehends forces tremendous in their awfulness. Yet it reveals to us the harmony which must be in the centre of all world activities, the

harmony which has a still voice which is music itself. Because we are able to take a view of this evening world where the distant and the near are brought face to face, we can see what is positively true in it—its beauty and unfathomable peace. When, through death, the deathlessness of some great life is discovered, the same vision of peace is revealed to us. The profound soul of Buddha is brought before our minds like this evening sky, and through all his struggles and sorrows, through his compassionate toil for men, we see a perfect assurance and repose of strength which is beauty. In smaller men the field of life is too narrow and therefore contradictions are too exaggerated to permit us any complete view of truth. But we may be sure, that in the currents of their lives, as they run beyond death, these contradictions are harmonised, for truth is over all, and beauty is the expression of truth.

It is given to us to reveal our soul, that which is One in us, which is eternal. This can only be done by its passage through the fleeting Many; to assert the infinity of the spirit by continual sacrifice of forms. The self being the vessel that gathers and holds, gives us the opportunity of giving up. If we believe only in *self* then we anxiously cling to our stores which causes us misery and failure. When we believe in *soul* the very inconstancy of life finds its eternal meaning and we feel that we can afford to lose.

Life's highest opportunity is to be able to offer hospitality to our God. We live in God's world and forget Him, for the blind acceptance which is one-sided never finds its truth. It is a desert which receives rain but never offers fruit in return and its receiving has no meaning. God's world is given to us: when we offer our world to God then is the gift realised.

# VISVA-BHARATI BULLETIN.

## I.

### Count Hermann Keyserling and his School of Wisdom at Darmstadt.

*By one who has just returned from there.*

(Mrs. Rachel T. Knight.)

A long low building all creeper grown, and with dignified and pleasing angles to its mellow roof—this is the home of Count Keyserling's School of Wisdom. Here on the first floor a few well appointed simple rooms, a small but excellent library, and a lecture hall; that is all.

It is here that twice yearly people gather from all parts of the world, people of all kinds of views and persuasions, with all kinds of aims and objects; and for a few days,—never more than a week—they meet and mingle, they lecture and listen, they talk and discuss under the guiding influence of Count Keyserling. I nearly said: "under the shadow of his wing", but that would not do at all, for he casts no shadow; rather is he a blazing arc-lamp set on a high arch and spraying out his light in all directions, to illumine rather than to warm.

And in this ring of light and under this high arch, many people gather together, nearly always people of enlightened and cultured minds, people with a purpose in life, with a clear direction, people with a plan, even sometimes those who are aflame with a mission, or those yet rarer souls that shine with a steady purity of wisdom, which is as a dew distilled from knowledges long outgrown. They gather under this electric radius, and they see many things not anticipated by them, perhaps even not always anticipated by their leader. They perceive and they think and they find contact—more often and more lastingly with each other than with him, for he blazes on, intent only on his blazing capacity.

Fair and tall and commanding in presence is Count Keyserling, of pure Baltic Type; and with a most amazing cataract-like flow of words equal in velocity and intensity whether the tap be turned to "English", "French" or "German". His tongue seems equally nimble and at home in them all, and may be so in other languages as well; for his great forehead seems to contain the whole spinning sphere within its contours.

**Dwijendranath Tagore.**

*( Died at Santiniketan on the 19th January, 1926, at the age of 86.)*

*From the original by Abanindra Nath Tagore.*

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